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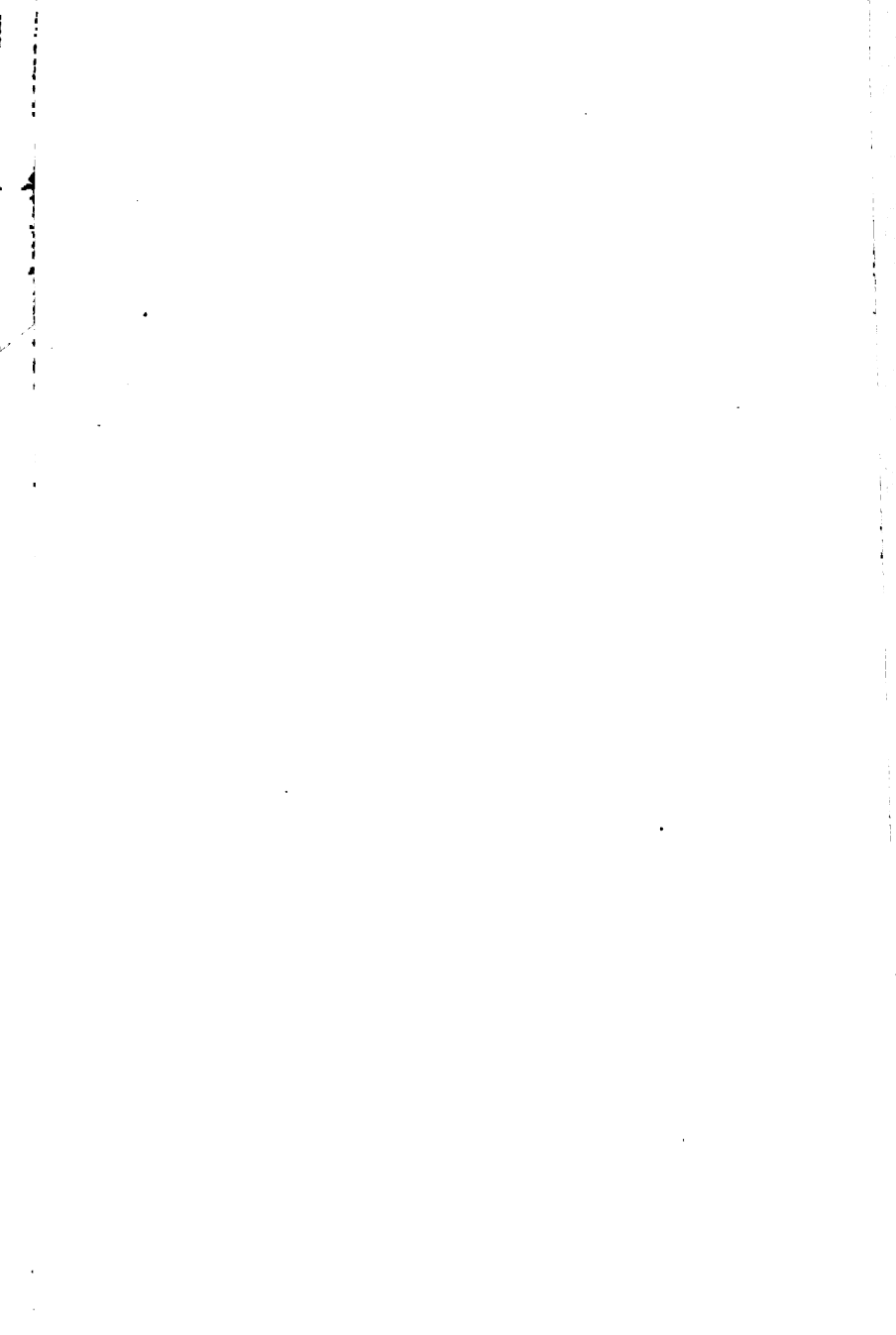


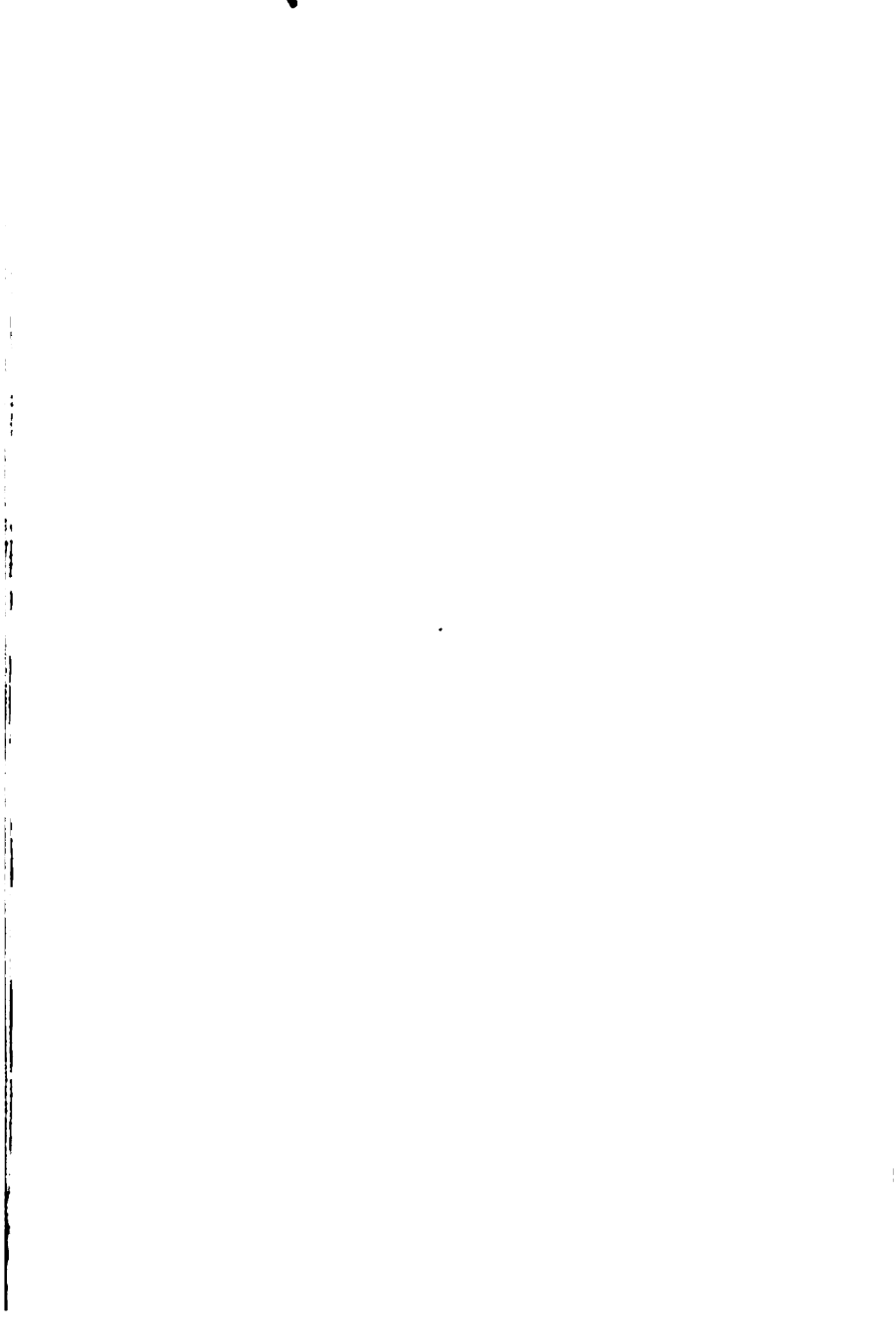
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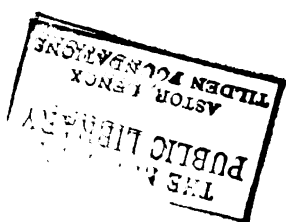
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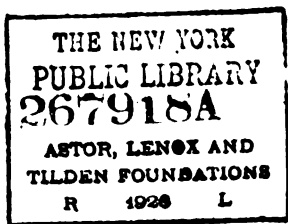
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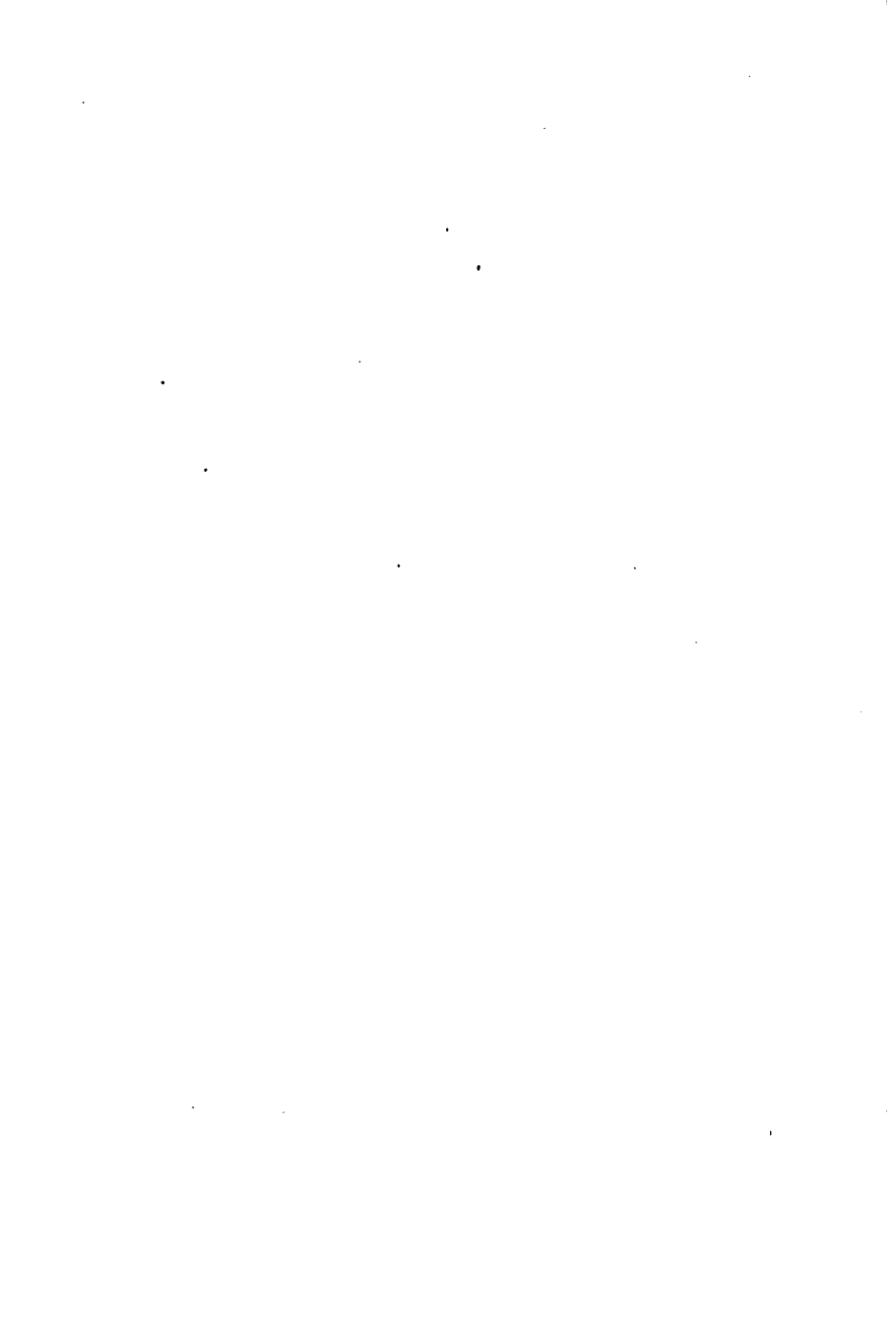
First Impression, September, 1918

TO
JOHN J. MAHONEY
AS THE MEMENTO OF
A TREASURED FRIENDSHIP

26 X 3 3 2

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THE STRANGE ADVENTURES OF BROMLEY BARNES

I

ADVENTURE OF THE THIRTEENTH TREATY

BROMLEY BARNES pushed aside the window curtains of his cozy bachelor apartment in Washington and gazed upon the glistening dome of the Capitol. There was something majestic about the imposing pile of marble and steel. In the moonlight, on that cold frosty night, it seemed to acquire new beauty. It was the embodiment of the honor and the dignity of the nation, and as the veteran investigator looked upon its graceful proportions, surmounted by the

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goddess of liberty, his heart thrilled with a feeling of renewed pride and patriotic emotion.

Thirty years in the confidential employment of the United States Government had not dulled the man, or staled his infinite variety. He had left his mark upon the Secret Service, and he also made a great reputation as the Chief of the Special Agents of the Treasury Department. The private missions he performed for the State Department would have won for him medals of honor in any foreign country, but in the land of the free and the home of the brave it was all taken as a matter of course and he was content to go upon the retired list while he was still in the full enjoyment of his mental and physical faculties.

He was thinking of some of the things he had done for his country as he looked out at the splendid dome sparkling in the moonlight of this crisp January night, and he squared his sturdy shoulders as he reminded himself that he was still fit for service if the emergency should occur. The clattering of a poker caused him to turn and look into the room.

But it was only Cornelius Clancy, his faithful assistant, stirring up the wood fire in the open grate. If it be said that Barnes was polished and persistent, it could be asserted with equal truth that Clancy was red-headed and hopeful. The two men complemented each other perfectly, and it was not surprising when Barnes resigned his position in the Secret Service that the loyal Clancy should quit too, in order to become his confidant, factotum and man of all work.

While the veteran's glance wandered from the dome of the Capitol to the shining asphalted pavements of the city, he was conscious of a sudden awakening of interest. A limousine, plum-colored and nobby in appearance, was swiftly and noiselessly making its way up the avenue leading to the St. Regis apartment house where the old investigator made his home. Bromley Barnes shoved the lace curtains farther to one side and strained his eyes in the effort to get a better view of the approaching vehicle. He looked at his watch. It was nearly midnight, and he gave a whistle of astonishment.

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"Calling me, sir?" asked Clancy, pausing in the act of directing a shower of sparks up the chimney.

"No,—but I'm seeing things."

"Seeing things?" echoed Cornelius, with a gesture of respectful curiosity.

"Yes, Brewster's down there in his plum-colored car, and I think he's coming to see me."

"What, the Secretary of State?"

"Certainly," answered the old man, haughtily, dropping the curtain and coming toward the center of the room; "it's not the first time the premier of the administration has visited my quarters, is it?"

"Oh, no," Clancy hastened to say with an apologetic air, "but the hour seemed to be so unusual."

Barnes nodded understandingly.

"You're right about that. The hour is unusual, and the business must be unusual. Brewster's not the man to go about paying social calls at midnight. He's been under a terrific strain lately, and if he had any spare time, he'd be resting. We're living in history-making times, my son, and I'll wager that that plum-colored limousine is telling a story

as it comes up that hill. I wonder what it means?"

He did not have to wait long for an answer. In a few moments there was a tap at the door and two men entered. The first, tall, distinguished, fur-coated, and with a neatly trimmed Van Dyke beard, put out his hands and greeted the detective warmly but with a somber manner. He inclined his head in the direction of his companion.

"You know Senator Hance, Bromley?"

"I have that honor, Mr. Secretary," said Bromley, bowing.

He might have added that the Chairman of the Foreign Relations Committee loomed so large in the public eye at the time that none could very well help knowing him. The Senator was thin and hatchet-faced, wore the conventional string tie of the Southern statesman, and seemed much more at his ease than the distinguished member of the cabinet. While he and Barnes were passing conversational small change the Secretary of State was removing his fur coat with the air of one who is very much at

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home. The detective turned from the Senator and addressed Brewster :

“ Mr. Secretary,” he said, with his characteristic frankness, “ you don’t need to tell me that something of great importance has brought you here at this hour of the night.”

Secretary Brewster gave Bromley Barnes a look of gratitude. It was the thanks of a busy man to one who understood him.

“ You’re right,” he replied, with equal conciseness ; “ something has happened to-night which may affect the honor and dignity of the United States if it does not plunge the world into a war quite as horrible as the one which has devastated Europe.”

Barnes gasped. He had not expected anything so sensational as this solemn statement from the head of the State Department.

“ You say,” he began hesitatingly, “ that it may affect the United States and the world. Might I —”

“ May is the word,” was the deliberate interruption. “ It is not too late to avert this calamity, and

you are the one man in Washington with the wit and the courage to do it."

Barnes flushed to the roots of the iron-gray hair which formed a circle about his bald head. He was too old, and had too much experience with the world, to be carried away by mere idle flattery. He knew Secretary Brewster too well to feel that he would indulge in vain words at such a time. His emotions came from the sense of responsibility which the statement carried with it. He was the one man in Washington that could avert a world calamity. It was a fearful task to place on the shoulders of any human being. Would he be equal to it? The Secretary must have read his thoughts in his face.

"I know you've retired from the Government service, but will you undertake this business?"

It was more than a question. It was more than a plea. It was a challenge. It did not take the old man two seconds to decide. He said simply:

"I will!"

Secretary Brewster impulsively grasped him by one hand, and placing the other on his shoulder, and

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holding him off at arm's length, said admiringly :

“ I knew you'd do it. I told Hance that before we reached here.”

The two men made a memorable picture. Both had achieved prominence in their respective callings and each had rendered notable service. Secretary Brewster looked — well, he looked precisely as a Secretary of State would be expected to look. Bromley Barnes, on the other hand, looked like anything except a detective. His smooth-shaven face and his rosy cheeks belied his years, and his clear gray eyes seemed to sweep away evasion and subterfuge as if by magic. His dress was fastidious. From the opal in the red tie down to the carefully creased trousers everything betokened precision and attention to details.

Senator Hance, who had been watching the meeting between the diplomat and the detective as an observer might watch the actors at a play, now permitted his glance to roam about the room. He noted with an appraising eye the paintings, the works of art, and the bookcases filled with literary

treasures, especially the rare first editions of "Robinson Crusoe" and the early American humorists. Presently he remarked, cynically:

"After you two gentlemen have finished admiring each other, you might get down to business."

The reminder brought an eager, if care-worn look into the tired eyes of the Secretary. He dropped into the nearest chair and began to address Barnes:

"The thing seems almost unbelievable, but I —"

He stopped short and looked at the stooping form of Cornelius Clancy, who was again stirring the blazing logs in the fireplace and sending showers of sparks up the chimney. Barnes caught the unspoken query.

"That's Clancy. You probably remember that he's my right bower; my other self. I'd be helpless without him. You can talk as freely and as safely before him as you might to the priest in the confessional. He's never betrayed a trust, or run from an enemy. Go ahead with your story, Mr. Secretary."

Clancy's face was as red as his hair at this tribute,

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but it might have been the reflection of the blazing logs. While he was still bending over the fire, Secretary Brewster resumed:

"I'm going to let you into a big State secret, Barnes, and without any preliminary talk. We are just on the eve of completing a treaty for the purchase of the Pauline Islands. One copy of the treaty — the thirteenth copy of the treaty — has been lost, stolen or mislaid, and unless it is recovered at once the whole business will crumble into nothingness, and the United States will lose the greatest opportunity in its history."

"Lost — stolen!" murmured the investigator.

"Precisely," replied the Secretary. "You know these matters have to be negotiated in absolute secrecy. Otherwise, they would be impossible. I do not need to tell you that we have passed the period of isolation in this country. We even have colonial possessions, distasteful as that term may sound to many of us. We have been gradually acquiring one group of islands after another, until only one set of islands of any importance remained between this

nation and the old world. I refer to the Pauline Islands. Their strategic importance cannot be overestimated. You know that the most important nations of Europe have combined under the designation of the European Alliance. They are very powerful, and they say that as long as this Alliance lasts there can never be another war in the Old World.

"Now," continued the Secretary, impressively, "the statesmen representing this new combination look with jealous eyes only upon the United States of America. If we get the Pauline Islands it will make us invincible. We can defy the world, but, as we have committed ourselves to a policy of peace, it means that the signing of this treaty and the unfurling of the Stars and Stripes over those islands means peace for the world, indefinitely."

"By George," ejaculated the detective, "but that's a big thing!"

"The biggest thing for humanity in the history of the world," asserted Brewster, "and for that reason we have been straining every nerve to bring it about. Sweden owns the islands. Sweden, in view of the

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enormous interests involved, is willing to sell us the islands. I prepared the treaty in collaboration with the Swedish minister. It has been approved by the king of that country, and the only thing that remains is to have it ratified by the Senate."

"Well, why don't you do it?"

"I'm coming to that," said Brewster, with a faint trace of irritation in his voice. "In order to get the thing in shape for action, thirteen copies of the treaty were typewritten by my confidential clerk. The President, the Swedish Minister, ten members of the Committee on Foreign Relations, and myself each had a copy."

"A pretty wide distribution," said Barnes, with a grim smile.

"Yes, but, under our form of government, it was necessary. However, I'm satisfied that each holder of the treaty regarded it as sacredly confidential. But, unfortunately, one copy of the treaty has been lost."

"Whose copy?"

"Mine!" confessed the Secretary, in a low voice.

Barnes stiffened up at this announcement. His eyes were dancing with interest.

“Where did you lose it?”

“I haven’t the faintest idea.”

“When?”

“Within the last two hours.”

The old man reached for a holder containing a supply of his inevitable supply of Pittsburgh stogies and passed them to his visitors. It was only after he had lit his own that he turned to Brewster and said:

“Mr. Secretary, it is necessary for you to tell me in detail just what has happened during the last two hours.”

“Well,” began the official, “I left the State Department a little before ten o’clock for the Capitol where I had arranged to meet the members of the Foreign Relations Committee. I made some minor changes in the verbiage of the treaty, and before leaving the office put the paper inside the black portfolio I use for carrying official papers. I went to the Capitol in the limousine you see outside, went into

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executive session with the members of the Senate Committee, and after securing their entire approval of the transaction placed the treaty in my portfolio again, got in the car and went home, but when I opened the portfolio to get the treaty it was gone!"

"Gone?"

"Yes, sir, gone as completely as if it had evaporated in the short ride from the Capitol to my home."

"Are you sure you put it in the portfolio?"

"Positive!"

"I can vouch for that," chimed in Senator Hance, "because I saw Mr. Brewster place it in the holder and then carefully fasten all of the straps."

"Was any one in the car with you?" asked Barnes of the Secretary.

"No, I was alone."

"Did the chauffeur open the door of the vehicle to let you in or out?"

"No, he never left his seat. Besides, I have perfect confidence in McLain. He has been with me for years."

"Well," said Barnes, dryly, "I never have confidence in any one — when I'm called on to solve a mystery."

"But what do you make of this case?" asked Brewster impatiently.

"Nothing yet. You'll have to give me more details. Tell everything that happened while you were in the Committee room."

"The meeting was inside closed doors," began the Secretary, with a look of resignation, "and I stood behind a desk while I addressed the members. After it ended, each one of the members carefully put his copy of the treaty away and I did the same with mine —"

"Placing it in the portfolio," interrupted Barnes.

"Yes, placing it in the little black portfolio."

"Then what happened?"

"Then the doors were opened and the public was admitted — at least, a number of newspaper correspondents came in. There were probably eighteen or twenty persons, each eager to know what had taken place. Of course, we could tell them noth-

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ing. One young woman called my attention to the fact that I had dropped my handkerchief, but when I stepped down to pick it up, it wasn't mine at all."

"Could the treaty have been stolen then?" asked Barnes.

Secretary Brewster gave him a look of annoyance.

"My dear Bromley, it was on the desk in front of me, strapped and fastened, and the cleverest magician couldn't have unfastened a single strap in those two seconds."

"All right, but I'd like to take a look at the portfolio."

The Secretary had it with him, and Barnes was soon engaged in making a careful examination of the receptacle which had been made to hold State secrets. It was about eight inches by ten, made of black leather, and on the side of it were the initials in ornate silver, J. T. B. A bag of distinction, with an individuality of its own, and yet a serviceable portfolio. Barnes examined each strap and buckle and every square inch of the leather. It

seemed as though his scrutiny would never end.

"How long have you had this?" he finally asked.

"Oh, for a long while."

"Do you use it much?"

"Almost constantly. For the last year it has been with me in all of my trips between my office and the White House and the Capitol!"

Barnes leaned back in his chair and thought and thought, and puffed his stogie until the room was filled with clouds of tobacco smoke. Presently he straightened up with a start, and said suddenly:

"Whom do you suspect?"

Secretary Brewster gave a nervous little laugh, and looked at Senator Hance.

"Surely, Barnes, that's a sweeping question. They say the city is full of spies, but it is not—"

"Well," interrupted the detective, "we'll put it in another form. Is there any country that would be particularly interested in preventing the consummation of this treaty?"

"Yes, any one of the countries represented in the new European Alliance."

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The bell in an adjoining steeple was heard tolling the hour of midnight. Senator Hance consulted his watch.

"Come on, Brewster," he said, "it's Friday morning."

"When was the treaty to be signed?" asked Barnes of the Secretary.

"At ten o'clock Saturday morning."

The detective made a hasty calculation.

"That's thirty-four hours from now. You may go ahead with the business, and I'll undertake to recover your thirteenth copy of the treaty before that time."

"And before any outsider has a chance to see it."

"Well, I'll do the best I can, and meanwhile it's understood that I'm to have the use of any of the Secret Service men I need?"

"Certainly. You understand why I do not want to use the ordinary facilities of the Government. The President does not know of this yet. I don't want to trouble him if I can help it. He has worries enough."

Five minutes later the Secretary and the Senator were seated in the plum-colored car, speeding down the asphalted incline, and Barnes and Clancy stood facing one another in the cozy apartment. The whirr of the machine had scarcely died away when Barnes turned to his assistant.

"Clancy, go to bed and get a good night's sleep. You're going to have a busy day ahead of you."

"But what about yourself — don't you think you'd better retire?"

"No; I've got something to do."

And after the faithful one had gone to bed, and his snores were punctuating the silence of the night, Barnes sat at the window of his room with the curtain drawn, gazing out upon the dome of the Capitol, and thinking. A jar, filled with stogies was by his side, and at intervals he leaned over and mechanically picked up a fresh cigar and lit and smoked it. Barnes was more than a detective, active or retired. He was a patriot, and love of country burned in his breast. He was not the flag-waving, hip-hip-hurrah, spread-eagle, vociferous type of American, but

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rather the kind who thinks deeply and calmly, and believes that upon the success of the experiment made by the Fathers of the Republic depends the hope of the oppressed of all nations.

He thought of this during the long vigil of the night, and he felt that he would be willing to run any risk to preserve this Government in all of its integrity. The dome of the Capitol seemed to him to symbolize all that was best in the nation. It was a beacon of hope, a light house for the world. In the meantime he was thinking of the problem that faced him. Who had taken the treaty? Where was it? Why had they taken it? Where was it now? And how could it be recovered? Hundreds of reasons and solutions flashed through his mind. One impossibility after another was rejected, until finally, with a shout of joy, he jumped to his feet. He had a theory that covered the whole story, and would lead to the recovery of the thirteenth treaty — under certain contingencies.

He noticed that it was daylight. The first gray streaks of dawn were beginning to streak the noble

outlines of the Capitol dome. He took that as a good augury, and the next moment his spirits were cheered still more by hearing the cheerful morning greetings of Clancy from the adjoining room. A bath and breakfast, and Barnes was ready for the big job. It really started the moment the detective picked up a business directory and began skimming through its pages. Presently he called to his assistant:

“Take these names and addresses, Clancy — and see that you get them right.”

In quick succession he called off a list of firms in Washington, and then closed the directory with a bang. After that, he paced the floor for several minutes thinking and apparently forgetful of the presence of his lieutenant. When he halted, it was to get down on one knee and open the little safe in a corner of the apartment. He reached in and brought out a red-covered book, much thumb marked.

“The book of spies,” commented Clancy, with a smile.

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“ Yes,” said the old man, looking up as if he had just recalled the presence of the red-haired one, “ the man — or the woman — I want is in this book. I wonder if I can pick out the right one? ”

“ I — I hope so,” was the fervent comment.

“ The first thing we have to do is to make calls on the persons whose business addresses I have given you,” said Barnes, meditatively, “ and after that I’ll decide whether to go after two of these spies, or whether to invoke the Secret Service and arrest all of the eighty-seven on suspicion.”

“ The eighty-seven? ”

“ Yes, that’s precisely the number of names I have in this book.”

“ It’s a big job.”

“ That’s the least part of the difficulty. But I’m fearful of the drag net method. The very fish we want may slip through the meshes.”

Barnes and Clancy divided the list of addresses they had obtained from the business directory, and after the old man had given his assistant explicit

directions, they started out on what the investigator called his "canvass for a clew." It was a long and tiresome task, and it was late in the afternoon when they met again. Clancy was dejected. His red hair seemed lusterless, and for a wonder he appeared to have lost his hopefulness. But the face of the old man was shining like the morning sun. He clapped Clancy on the shoulder.

"There's nothing like meditation before investigation, my boy. I've found the first clew, and it fits into my midnight dream like a bit of marble in a mosaic."

"What are you going to do now?"

"I'm going for the two suspects whose names were in my book of spies. And you're going with me. I want your moral and physical support."

It was dusk when the two men entered the hallway of an apartment house in the northeastern section of Washington. Barnes pressed an electric button beneath a card on which was engraved the name of Mortimer Myers. A feminine voice came through the speaking tube a moment later, and in

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The old man retreated to the far end of the room and produced a small revolver from his hip pocket. The woman advanced toward him with an agonized look on her face.

“What are you going to do?”

“I’m going to try a little experiment; I’m going to try and hit the bull’s eye.”

She gave a shriek.

“Don’t shoot; for God’s sake, don’t shoot!”

At the same moment the door of the wardrobe was shoved open, and a man emerged, looking sheepish and much disheveled. Bromley Barnes pocketed his pistol and smiled ironically at the unmasked one.

“I’m sorry that it was necessary to call you from your retirement, but my business would not wait.”

Mr. Mortimer Myers gave a silly laugh.

“I — I didn’t want to see any visitors. What do you want?”

Barnes looked at him intently and spoke with great deliberation.

“I want the portfolio you picked up in the rooms



**"THE DOOR OF THE WARDROBE WAS SHOVED OPEN AND A
MAN EMERGED"**



of the Committee on Foreign Relations yesterday afternoon."

The man went pale beneath his dark skin. He moistened his lips with the tip of his tongue, and after a moment, said:

"I—I don't know what you are talking about."

"Oh, yes, you do. I want that portfolio, and I want it right away."

Mr. Mortimer Myers was gradually regaining his self-possession. When he spoke again, it was in a more defiant tone:

"I haven't got the article you speak about, and I haven't been near the rooms of the Committee on Foreign Relations. I can account for every minute of yesterday."

"Ah!" said the old man, significantly, "an alibi!"

"Yes," retorted the other, raising his voice, "an alibi, if you want to call it that. And now, I'd like to know what you mean by breaking into my rooms in this way. A man's home is his castle and —"

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"Yes," was the purring response, "even a wardrobe may be a man's castle — sometimes."

Barnes was moving about the room with seeming aimlessness, but as the suspect dropped his eyes the detective reached over to a table, and furtively picking up a white blotter, slipped it in his pocket.

"I'll not bandy words with you, sir!" exclaimed Myers.

"All right," said Barnes, with an air of resignation and implied defeat, "if you won't help us we'll have to say good day."

He left the room with Clancy, and as soon as they reached the sidewalk they started in the direction of Barnes' quarters near the Capitol. Not a word passed between them until they were safely in the cozy apartments. It was then that Clancy ventured to say:

"I thought you had two suspected spies on your list. This one and another."

"Yes," admitted Barnes, absently, "Myers and a woman, but as the woman happened to be in the

room with him it won't be necessary to make a special call on her."

"And yet you left both of them without getting any results."

The investigator smiled benignly.

"They'll be watched day and night — I've arranged for that. And as for results, let's take a look at this blotter."

As he spoke, he drew the little square of absorbing paper from his pocket. It had evidently been freshly used. The ink marks on it were meaningless at first, but presently, with the aid of a magnifying glass, they deciphered the following:

drapsaG
ot uoy ees
prahs net

It must have taken at least thirty minutes to bring out all of the faint lines on the blotter, but finally Barnes turned to his assistant with a smile and had him hold the blotter in front of the mirror. What they beheld from the reflection was faithfully trans-

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mitted to paper, and when the missing links were supplied, it said :

“ Gaspard :

Will see you at ten sharp to-night.”

“ My boy,” said the old man, triumphantly, “ all that we have to do from now until the end of the chapter is to watch and wait.”

“ Not here? ”

“ Oh, not here. The scene of our activities will be transferred to another part of the town. In the meanwhile, let me see that blue book.”

The veteran investigator carefully studied the list of the names and addresses of the foreign diplomats residing in the city of Washington. Barnes knitted his brows. The volume evidently did not give him the information he desired. But presently he turned to the back of the book and there he found some written memoranda in the copper-plate hand of Cornelius Clancy, and a few newspaper clippings in the form of “ futures.” The red-headed and hopeful one had kept the directory of diplomats up to

date. The very last insertion told of the arrival in the country of Baron Gaspard, who was to represent the new European Alliance at Washington. He had visited the Capital to lease a home, was now in New York, and was expected to return to Washington that evening.

Five minutes later Barnes and Clancy were in a taxicab speeding in the direction of Georgetown.

The mansion selected by Baron Gaspard was one of the finest in the national Capital. He was to present his credentials to the Secretary of State at high noon on the following day, and to be received by the President immediately thereafter. His fame was international, and it was quite appropriate that his official home should be in keeping with the importance of his official standing. To-night there seemed to be unusual activity about the neighborhood of the new embassy. More than one vehicle with the coat-of-arms of a foreign nation drove up, and as it paused in the graveled roadway a liveried footman with a high silk hat, a long blue coat and brass buttons, hastened to open the doors of the car-

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riage and escort the visitors to the vestibule of the mansion.

At precisely ten o'clock a hired taxicab made its way creaking and groaning to the front of the Baron's home, and when it stopped who should alight but Mr. Mortimer Myers. He drew his loose raglan overcoat about his body protectingly, and peered around with the air of a man who is fearful and ill at ease. But while he hesitated, the tall-hatted and brass-buttoned footman came down the pathway and saluted him in military, if not diplomatic, style. He leaned over and whispered to the dark-skinned one:

“The Baron wants to see you alone — follow me to the lodge.”

Mortimer breathed a sigh of relief, and immediately trailed after the liveried one. The lodge was a one-story stone building at the other entrance to the embassy grounds. A single light was burning in the structure, and the two men could see a bulky form within. The footman opened the door and Mortimer entered. To his surprise, the uniformed

one followed him and locked the door from the inside. The spy thought this strange, but he stepped forward with the intention of speaking to Baron Gaspard — and gazed into the muzzle of a revolver in the hands of Bromley Barnes.

“Trapped!” he gasped, and glanced in the direction of the embassy butler who had led him into the cage. But the high hat and the blue coat had already been discarded, and he saw only the freckled face, the dancing blue eyes, and the red head of Cornelius Clancy.

“Now,” he heard the stern voice of the old investigator saying, “I’ll have that portfolio!”

Slowly and with trembling fingers he unbuttoned his overcoat and from within its folds he produced a black leather portfolio on the outside of which, in ornate silver, were the initials “J. T. B.”

“Secretary Brewster’s bag!” gasped the astonished Clancy.

The words were scarcely out of his mouth before Barnes grabbed the portfolio and opening it, brought out the thirteenth copy of the great treaty. The

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next minute he pushed the door ajar and whistled softly. Two Secret Service men appeared and accepted the prisoner.

"If he dares to make an outcry," said Barnes, sternly, "shoot him on the spot."

While they were going off with Mr. Mortimer Myers, the faithful Clancy was staring at the black leather portfolio like a man in a trance. Barnes laughed at the young man's amazement.

"It's a perfect imitation of the original, son," he said. "The minute Secretary Brewster told me his story, I knew he had been flim-flammed by the old trick of the bank sneak thieves. A customer is counting his money at a side desk. The crook comes along, and dropping a note on the floor, tells the victim he has lost some of his money, and while he stoops down to pick it up the sneak gets off with the roll."

"But when Secretary Brewster arose, his portfolio was still there."

Barnes smiled.

"Not *his* portfolio but one that is an exact dupli-

cate. The only flaw was that it was new while Brewster's, as you will note, was partly worn from constant use. I detected that much in my rooms, and when I went to one of the leather shops and found that Mr. Mortimer Myers had ordered a portfolio with the initials 'J. T. B.' on it I knew that that part of the case was complete."

"How did you know Myers was in the wardrobe in his room?"

"He gave himself away—the end of his coat was sticking out of the edge of the door."

"And the woman—"

"Is his accomplice who did the trick with the handkerchief at the Capitol."

"Chief," said Clancy, after a moment of hesitation, "you got the treaty all right, but you can't prove anything on Baron Gaspard. You didn't let the thing go far enough."

"I let it go as far as I dare—my contract was to keep that treaty out of foreign hands. But you're right about one thing, Clancy. The job isn't quite finished. A conspiracy is like a weed—it's

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got to be torn up by the roots. After you've given that butler's rig back to your Tipperary friend, go to my rooms and you'll see the climax of this little drama."

As they parted, Barnes went directly to the door of the embassy and asked for Baron Gaspard. The diplomat, a florid-faced man with a waxed mustache and a goatee, appeared in a few moments and demanded brusquely:

"What do you want?"

"Baron," said Barnes, in a low voice, "Mr. Mortimer Myers finds it impossible to reach here and wishes you to accompany me to a rendezvous he has selected."

The man shrugged his shoulders.

"But that is out of the question — he must come to me."

"But it is a physical impossibility. He bids me say that you will never forgive yourself if you do not respond. I have a conveyance here. It will not take many minutes."

The detective spoke with great earnestness, and

pointed to the taxicab which still waited in front of the embassy. After a slight hesitation, the Baron shrugged his shoulders — and agreed. In fifteen minutes they were in the bachelor apartments of Bromley Barnes. The rooms appeared to be vacant. The diplomat looked about him and exclaimed impatiently:

“Come, come, my man, I’m in a hurry.”

“You understand what he was to hand you, I suppose. A very, very important document.”

The representative of the European Alliance, in his eagerness, was taken off his guard.

“Yes,” he cried irritably, “the treaty — the copy of the Pauline treaty!”

Barnes bowed.

“The gentleman that has that document is here.”

As he spoke, he drew aside the curtain of the adjoining room and Baron Gaspard was confronted by John T. Brewster, the American Secretary of State.

The Baron turned as white as a sheet, and when he spoke it was in a husky voice:

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"I — I have made a great blunder!"

"Yes, Baron," was the cheerful reply, "and in diplomacy a blunder is worse than a crime."

On the evening of the day of these stirring events, the newspapers carried two stories of sensational importance. The first told of the consummation of the great treaty involving the purchase of the Pauline Islands, and the second announced that Baron Gaspard, prince of diplomats, who had come to represent the European Alliance in Washington, would not even present his credentials, but would return home on the first available steamship. One rumor said that the Baron had been personally affronted by the Secretary of State, and another that he was *persona non grata* to the American Government. But, however that may be, the Pauline-American treaty was hailed everywhere as a wonderful triumph of statesmanship, while the Gaspard-Brewster affair remained one of the world's greatest diplomatic mysteries.

II

ADVENTURE OF THE BOLTED DOOR

THE day of days had arrived — the day when Hugh Helverson was to give a private view of the marvelous contrivance which was to end the submarine peril. The old inventor had spent a month of trying days and sleepless nights in the workshop of his modest cottage on the Woodley Road, and this morning all of official Washington was on the tip-toe of expectation.

Bromley Barnes was one of the select few who were to get the first glimpse of the submarine destroyer. He rose early, and as he looked out of the window and saw the sun gilding the dome of the Capitol he took it as a good omen — as a sign that the product of Hugh Helverson's brain would furnish the United States with the instrument that was to insure the freedom of the seas.

He dressed carefully for the occasion, and when

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he finished, his appearance was irreproachable. The carefully creased trousers, the gray spats, the gold-handled cane, and the opal in the green tie made him look very unlike a detective. Indeed, he seemed more like one of the diplomats, statesmen and scientists whom he expected to meet at the home of the inventor.

The Helverson cottage stood back a short distance from the road. It had a stone foundation, but the superstructure was of wood, painted green and white. An addition, in the rear, contained the workshop where the inventor had been toiling so unremittingly. But it is a long lane that has no turning, and his day of triumph had arrived — that day when he might say he had done for his country that which seemed beyond the skill and imagination of anyone else.

Barnes was accompanied by Cornelius Clancy, and when they arrived at the house they were surprised to find a group of distinguished looking men walking about the porch in a disconsolate manner. The house itself was tightly closed — doors, win-

dows and every possible means of entrance and exit seemed hermetically sealed. It was after ten o'clock, which was the hour fixed for the official view of the great invention. The moment Barnes reached the place, a young man hurried down the graveled path to meet him. It was Captain Mayne, a naval officer, who had been detailed for duty as a special assistant to the Secretary of the Navy.

"I'm glad you're here, Barnes!" he exclaimed. "I don't know what to make of this business. No one seems to be in the house, and we were expressly bidden to be here at ten o'clock."

"Maybe Helverson's overslept himself. You know these inventors take queer turns. They're not normal."

He tried to speak cheerfully, but he had grave misgivings. He realized, probably better than anyone else, the dangers that surrounded Hugh Helverson while he was at work on the much-talked-about destroyer.

"We had no right to leave him here alone," retorted Captain Mayne.

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"Alone?" echoed Barnes.

"Sure — he made it a condition that he was not to be disturbed. He had an assistant, Conan Williams, but even Williams was only permitted in the workshop during the daytime."

"I understood that his daughter and a Japanese servant lived in the house with him."

The naval attache shook his head.

"That's not exactly correct. Hilda Helverson is the pride and joy of his life, but she was not permitted to stay in the house. She has apartments near the Capitol. She came to see him each day, but never stayed very long and he was always impatient to get back to his work."

"But the Japanese servant?"

"He came and prepared Helverson's meals and then went about his business."

"So the old man was all alone here last night?"

"You have said it."

At this point in the dialogue, one of the officials on the porch came down and joined the two men. He was angry at the delay.

“ See here,” he shouted, “ won’t somebody do something — and at once? ”

Without replying, Bromley Barnes hurried up the pathway to the door. He tried it but without result. He pushed the electric button.

There was a tense silence.

After a few moments, he pounded vigorously on the panels of the door with his fist. But the only response was the echoes of his blows. Captain Mayne smiled sadly.

“ We’ve tried that already. You may hammer until doomsday without getting a reply.”

The old investigator’s face became very grave. He thought for a moment, and then made his decision. He turned to the group around him.

“ Gentlemen,” he said, “ unusual conditions call for unusual methods. I’m going to take the responsibility of breaking into this house. It may be a mistake. But if so, I’m willing to shoulder the blame. Come on, Clancy, and you, too, Mayne. Now, altogether! ”

The three men lined up in front of the closed

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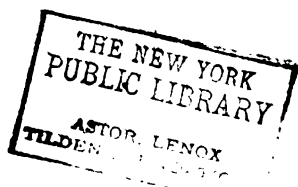
door. Some one sang out "one-two-three" and then simultaneously three bodies were hurled against the frame work. There was a rumbling sound and the straining of the hinges, but the door remained intact. For the second time the performance was repeated with the same result. They paused long enough to get their breath and then made a third drive. This time there was the crash of splitting wood, the creaking of iron work, and the door fell inward with a thud. The three men hastened into the room, followed by the others. They found themselves in a sparsely furnished living apartment, but they had only proceeded a few feet when they drew back shrinkingly. Barnes, in the lead, detected something on the floor. He leaned over and gave a gasp of horror.

And no wonder, for lying there at full length, was the body of Hugh Helverson!

The detective dropped to his knees and made a hurried inspection of the helpless body. He felt the hands and placed his ear against the broad chest.



“ MADE A HURRIED INSPECTION OF THE HELPLESS BODY ”



When he looked up, his face was very grave, and when he spoke it was in a low, reverent tone.

"His race is run," he murmured, "he is dead!"

Involuntarily the men lifted their hats and stood there looking down at the cold and stiffened form with something like awe in their faces. One man had sufficient presence of mind to hurry for a physician, but when the doctor came, a few minutes later, it was only to pronounce the aged inventor "quite dead." A careful examination of the body disclosed the fact that Helverson had been shot through the heart. The prostrate form lay on a large rug near the entrance of the hallway, and a tiny pool showed where the life blood of the gifted man had trickled from the wound in his breast. Barnes had know him well in life, but at this supreme moment all of his professional instincts came to the surface. Force of habit was strong and he found himself giving orders that nothing in the house should be disturbed, and sending a messenger to summon the coroner to the house of death.

After the room had been cleared he began his in-

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vestigation. The furniture was in order and there was no evidence of a struggle. Automatically three questions came into his mind. Was it an accident? Could it have been suicide? Was it murder? He knew that Helverson had been shot. He was certain that the single shot had gone through the inventor's heart. Death must have been instantaneous. But at the outset he was confronted with a puzzling circumstance. The weapon with which the deed had been committed could not be found. He searched every nook and corner of the room and he could not find a gun or pistol of any kind.

He opened the two large windows of the living room — opened them with difficulty for they were barred and bolted, and the rust on the bolts proved that they had been closed for some time. Then he went to the rear of the house and he discovered that it was almost hermetically sealed. He visited the rooms on the upper floors and found that everything there was tightly closed. There was no opening on the roof through which anyone could have come or gone. The trap leading to the roof was bolted from

the inside. After a while Barnes came down stairs again and seated himself in a large arm chair and tried to think in a coherent way. He remembered that the front door had been bolted. He examined the shattered door to make sure of the fact, and then the astonishing thing presented itself to his partly dazed intelligence.

Hugh Helverson had been shot and killed in a house that was barred and bolted from cellar to roof.

The thing was positively uncanny. If the front door had been merely deadlocked, it would have explained everything. But how was it possible for a man to kill the inventor and then escape without leaving some signs of his exit? The question was too much, even for this man who had spent the greater part of his life in solving crimes that seemed to be unsolvable. The coroner came while he was trying to make the unreasonable facts seem reasonable. The official happened to be a physician as well as a coroner, and after a brief examination of the remains he said that, in his opinion, death had en-

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sued six or eight hours before. The body was cold, and it was safe to say that the poor man had been killed shortly after midnight.

By this time Hilda Helverson had arrived, and when she beheld the dead form of her father she broke down and would have fainted if it had not been for the prompt application of smelling salts. While this was going on, Conan Williams, the assistant of the inventor, came into the room, and when he realized the meaning of the scene acted like a man who was bereft of his senses. He recovered quickly and then gave his attention to the distracted girl. It was a trying time for all, but Barnes did not fail to notice the tenderness with which Williams treated Hilda Helverson. It was not the ordinary sympathy with which one treats a fellow creature who is in trouble. It was more than this, and the detective was not surprised when he learned later that the two young persons were engaged to be married. He was given to understand that it was a secret engagement, and but for the unfortunate tragedy might not have been made pub-

lic for some time. But death breaks down all artificial barriers, and Williams, with much manliness, said the time had come when he should act as a protector to the girl who had been so unexpectedly deprived of her natural guardian.

After they had gone, Barnes made a second tour of the house. The Japanese servant, Sarto Joseph, had arrived and he assisted the detective in his search of the place. There was absolutely nothing in the upper part of the house to throw any light on the mystery, and Barnes came to the conclusion that the solution, if there were any solution, would have to be found in the living room. It was almost devoid of ornament, just the sort of room that might have been expected to appeal to a man of the temperament of such a man as Hugh Helverson. Over the old-fashioned fireplace was a large oil painting of the father of the dead inventor. It might not have passed muster as a work of art, but it was a striking piece of work just the same. A pair of keen eyes seemed to peer out at the spectator. The Japanese servant said that Helverson was fond of

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gazing at this picture and had more than once declared that he got the inspiration for his work by looking at it. The eyes, he declared, followed one about the room. Sarto shivered as he gave the detective this bit of information. Barnes tried the experiment, and then assured the frightened servant there was nothing supernatural about the business. It was merely an optical delusion which he had often found in other pictures.

At this point Captain Mayne came hurrying into the house, followed by another naval officer.

"See here, Barnes," he cried, "in the excitement we forgot all about the invention. The Secretary couldn't get here but he told me to find out about it."

The veteran investigator smiled sadly.

"I haven't forgotten it by any means, only I felt that we had more pressing business to attend to at first."

Even while he spoke, he was walking in the direction of the room in the rear of the house. The door was locked, as he had expected. He walked back

to the prostrate body on the floor of the living room, and gently searching the pockets of the dead man, found a bunch of keys. Instinctively he recognized the key of which he was in search. Once again he made for the rear apartment and this time succeeded in getting within. Captain Mayne followed him, and the first thing the two men noticed was a covered object resting on a long table. The detective threw off the covering and exposed a curious looking model — whale shaped and with a sharp point at the bow. The naval officer examined it with feverish haste. Presently he gave a loud exclamation, an exclamation of mingled joy and amazement:

“ He’s got it! He’s got it!

Barnes looked at him sharply.

“ What are you talking about?” he asked, grabbing the young man and peering into his face.

“ About this invention!” Mayne cried. “ It’s the thing that we have sought in vain for years. It’s precisely the thing needed by the Government, and never more than at this particular minute. It’s

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perfect in every particular. I'll stake my reputation as a man and a sailor on the assertion that this contrivance is going to revolutionize naval warfare."

"Do you think it has been tampered with in any way?" asked Barnes.

Captain Mayne made a second examination of the queer looking object on the table, and when he had concluded, said:

"No — it's in perfect order."

The detective gave a sigh.

"I'm glad for the sake of the Government," he said, "but I'm sorry on another account, and that is that it makes the death of Helverson more of a mystery than ever. The quickest way of solving a crime is to find the motive. Get the motive, and it will not take long to get the man. If I could feel that the spies of some other Government were interested in the death of Helverson or the destruction of his invention, I'd have something to work on. But you've taken that from me."

Captain Mayne's rosy cheeks took on an added hue. He scratched his head and said presently:

"It's just possible that a cast might have been made from this model. But I doubt it, and, in any event, why should they have left the patent uninjured, and at the disposal of the United States?"

"That's so," admitted Barnes, "but there's a possibility that they might have been frightened off before they completed their program."

The detective and the Assistant Secretary of the Navy walked up and down the room while they talked. Mayne was making his tenth turn about the apartment when he suddenly halted.

"Say," he cried, "have you thought of Sarto?"

"What — the Jap?"

"The very same. He knows more than his prayers, and if I were you I'd give him the third degree."

Barnes was thoughtful.

"No," he said, after a while, "I won't give him the third degree. If he's as shrewd as you say, he'll beat us at that game. But I'll have him watched day and night."

Hugh Helverson was buried with all of the official

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honors that it was possible for a grateful nation to bestow. His invention ever afterwards bore his name and it was conceded to be the most important gift that had been made to civilization in a decade. Both before and after the funeral, Barnes was busily engaged upon the case, but at the end of the seventh day he was almost ready to confess defeat. This was a most unusual attitude for the old man, but he confessed that the case was a most unusual one. That a man should be shot and killed in a house that was closed and bolted, and that not a single clew to the manner of his death be found was mystifying indeed.

The thing was so uncanny that it began to get on the nerves of the veteran. But it was at this stage of the game that he became more determined than ever.

“The most improbable things are the most probable — after they’ve been solved,” was the epigram he hurled at Captain Mayne one afternoon.

The young naval officer looked at the detective meditatively. He was interested in the search —

deeply interested, and the excitement of the chase was beginning to get into his veins. They were in the apartment of Bromley Barnes at the time, and the youthful Assistant Secretary of the Navy suddenly felt a desire to personally solve the mystery.

"You said in the beginning," he remarked, "that it was absolutely necessary to find the motive for a crime before you could discover the criminal."

Barnes puffed lazily at a cigar and watched the smoke curl about his head.

"I think I made some remark to that effect," he conceded.

"Well, why not apply that theory in this case? And if you do, how would you start?"

"By finding out all I could about Helv his fads, his purposes in life, and so on."

"Very good," conceded Captain Mayne, "that's settled. How would you take the first step in that direction?"

The old investigator, without answering reached up to his bookshelf, and pulled down a red-covered volume of "Who's Who in America" and quickly

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turned to the H's. He soon found what he wanted in the following compact biographical notice:

"Helverson, Hugh, Inventor. Born in Stockholm, Sweden, July 22, 1850. Came to the United States with parents at the age of five. Educated by private tutors and at Harvard University. Afterwards studied chemistry and engineering. Spent ten years in the laboratory of Thomas A. Edison, near East Orange. Invented device for preventing explosions in coal mines; attachment for increasing the speed of submarines; burglar alarm for household purposes; improvement for hydro-airplanes and twenty other labor-saving and safety devices now in common use. Clubs, none. Author 'Our National Coast Defense System' and 'The Future of Electricity.' Address, 1895 Georgetown Road, Washington, D. C."

He handed the open book to his young friend, and pointing to the brief sketch, said:

"I've read that six times already. It probably contains the key to the puzzle. Maybe you can find it. So far, it has eluded me."

Captain Mayne read the paragraph carefully and then returned the book to its place.

"That tells me nothing at all," he said, decisively,

"but I have a theory of my own that I would like to test."

"What is it?"

"It concerns Conan Williams, the assistant to Hugh Helverson. I've learned some things about that young man, and I'd like to cross-examine him in your presence. And I want to do it in the room where the body of the old man was found."

Barnes chuckled.

"The old theory of the scene of the murder, eh? It's too late to compel him to place his hand on the dead body of the victim."

The tone of the detective displeased the young man.

"It's easy enough to laugh at me," he retorted, "but I don't see that you have accomplished much. What I want to know is whether I have your permission to go ahead."

"You certainly have. I'll help you, too, because your little experiment may throw some light on the situation."

So it came about that a queer little group gathered

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in the little cottage on the following afternoon. There were Barnes, Cornelius Clancy, Captain Mayne, Sarto Joseph, the Japanese valet of the dead inventor, Hilda Helverson, and Conan Williams. They were all keyed up to a high pitch, and as they seated themselves in the living-room there was a sense of expectancy that filled the darkened apartment. Williams was nervous and ill at ease, and his pale face seemed whiter than ever in contrast with his coal black hair and his blazing, black eyes. Captain Mayne, toying with a pencil, turned to the young man with an air of carelessness:

“Mr. Williams,” he said, “I believe that you were associated with Hugh Helverson in most of his inventive work?”

“I was,” came the quiet reply.

“I’m told that you were especially interested in the submarine destroyer which was his final, if not, his greatest work?”

“No one knows how intensely interested I was in that particular bit of work.”

“You helped him with it — a little bit?”

"I helped him with it a great deal," came the passionate retort, with emphasis on the last two words.

The unexpected display of feeling caused every eye to turn on the white-faced young man. Captain Mayne, still toying with his pencil, gave a smile of satisfaction.

"It's just as I thought," he murmured.

"What do you mean?"

"I mean that you were jealous of Hugh Helverson's growing fame."

"It's a lie!" shouted Williams. "But," he added in a lower tone, "I'll admit that I have never been given credit for the part I had in many of his inventions. The world applauded him. I was unnoticed. No one paid any more attention to me than they did to the chair in his workshop, or the hammer in his hand."

"Oh, Conan," murmured Hilda Helverson, "please don't talk in that dreadful way."

A twitch of pain distorted his white face. He turned to her appealingly.

"Hilda," he begged, "you know I'm telling the truth."

Love and distress were mingled in the glance she gave him.

"I know what you did," she replied, quietly, with emphasis on the personal pronoun, "but father was too absorbed in his work to pay any attention to the instruments he used — human or inanimate."

During this little aside, Bromley Barnes, sitting behind the others, kept his eye rested upon the inventor's assistant. Captain Mayne, immensely pleased with his cross-examination, resumed the attack.

"We'll pass the question of jealousy and rivalry," he said, "and come to something more important. Mr. Williams, do you recall a conversation you had with Hugh Helverson on the night before he was killed?"

A wave of color rushed over the pale face of Conan Williams. He moistened his lips with the tip of his tongue. He spoke in a low voice:

"I do."

"Isn't it a fact that you had a quarrel with him and that you threatened him?"

The silence that followed the question was oppressive. Every eye was on the young man. Every ear waited with expectancy. It seemed a full minute before the answer came. The two words were literally torn from the victim:

"It is," he said.

A feeling of horror oppressed every one in the little room. Hilda Helverson was weeping silently, and the others were breathing heavily. Captain Mayne arose as if he could no longer contain himself. Williams followed his example. The young naval officer pointed his finger at the witness.

"One more question," he said. "Isn't it a fact that you were lurking in the shadow of this house on that last fatal night — lurking behind the trees when Hugh Helverson came into that doorway for the last time?"

A cry of anguish came from the lips of Hilda Helverson.

“Oh, this is cruel!” she exclaimed, “this is too terrible! You must not go on with it!”

Strangely enough, Conan Williams suddenly became the most self-possessed person in the room. His face was as white as chalk and his lips were compressed, but he faced the ordeal with calmness and courage. Captain Mayne was excited and so were the others, but the waves of emotion beat about the suspected man without disturbing him. The cross-examiner spoke shrilly :

“I’m sorry for you, Miss Helverson,” he said, “but I must have an answer from Mr. Williams.”

But Williams stood there as still as a statue, and as though he had lost his hearing.

“I insist upon a reply,” shouted Mayne; “were you lurking in the grounds when Hugh Helverson came into the house? Answer me yes, or no?”

“Yes,” replied Williams.

A shocked silence fell upon the group. It was broken by a despairing wail from Hilda Helverson.

“Tell them everything, Conan. If you love me, tell the whole story.”

"I have nothing more to say," was the dogged response.

"Tell us what you were doing there," commanded Mayne, and as he spoke, he stamped his foot on the floor with anger and determination.

His heavy boot came down with such force that it shook the pictures on the wall. The oil painting of the father of Hugh Helverson, which hung over the fireplace, sagged and assumed a crooked position. It gave the venerable one a rakish appearance. One eye was discolored. He seemed to be leering at the little company, and to be enjoying their discomfort. Barnes noticed it and, with his ever-present sense of the artistic, went over to straighten it. He spent some time examining the picture and the frame. As he stood there he heard Williams announcing for the third time:

"I have nothing more to say."

"If you refuse to explain this matter to us you may be forced to explain it in a court of law."

Hilda Helverson gave a scream.

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"Oh, Conan," she cried, "please tell everything."

Williams looked about him haughtily. He glanced at Mayne.

"Am I to understand that I am accused of murdering Hugh Helverson?"

The captain was about to speak when Bromley Barnes stepped forward.

"I've been playing second fiddle for you young folks," he said quietly, "but I think it's time for me to take charge of the performance."

They all looked at him inquiringly, and he proceeded:

"Captain Mayne has been making an experiment here, and it has not been entirely successful —"

"But," interrupted that person hotly, "you haven't given me time to finish. If you will kindly stand aside for a few minutes I think we'll be able to clear up this mystery."

"I don't think so," replied the old man, not unkindly. "Now, I want to make a proposition to you. I've learned something to-day and I want to

make a little experiment of my own. I want you all to come here at midnight and I'll undertake to reproduce the events of that eventful night. In a word, I hope — with the kind assistance of Mr. Williams — to show you exactly how Hugh Helverson was killed."

Conan Williams looked at the detective with distended eyes.

"What — what do you mean?" he faltered.

The old investigator placed his hand on the shoulder of the young man.

"My friend," he said, "I take it that you are anxious to clear up this mystery."

"Why — yes."

"Then do as I tell you, and I promise that the whole business will be perfectly understandable before the dawn of another day."

Williams looked miserable. Nevertheless, he nodded his head in assent. Hilda Helverson, her fair face clouded with grief, took his arm as a means of showing the love she had for him. They left the house with Bromley Barnes and Captain Mayne

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bringing up the rear. The officer spoke to the detective.

"But Williams — will he be here?"

Barnes smiled.

"I pledge you my word that he will be here at the appointed time."

Just as the party reached the end of the graveled walk, Williams turned and addressed them:

"I hope," he said, brokenly, "that you won't misunderstand my outburst. I — I loved Hugh Helverson, and I think he was the greatest genius of his time. He deserves and is entitled to all of the credit for this submarine device. It is his and his alone. I helped, but I have sense enough to realize that his was the guiding mind. But I have led a life of self-effacement and — and I guess his death must have gotten on my nerves."

Then he turned abruptly, and giving his arm to Hilda Helverson, marched away.

It was a few minutes before midnight when a ghostly looking procession filed up the graveled path leading to the door of the cottage on Woodley Road.

Bromley Barnes, immaculately attired, was in the lead, and directly behind him was Cornelius Clancy, keenly alive to the possibilities of an adventure. Hilda Helverson, dressed in deep black, and with her countenance showing traces of grief and anxiety, was followed by Sarto Joseph and Captain Mayne. The young naval officer had the air of a man who is oppressed with a sense of responsibility. He said nothing, but at intervals the flicker of a smile about the lips indicated that he was attending the performance from a sense of his regard for Bromley Barnes and that he looked upon the whole business with unfeigned skepticism.

The party made its way into the hallway, and the detective skillfully guided each person along the far side of the entrance and to a chair that had been previously placed in the living room. When they had all taken their places in this manner, the investigator locked the front door. There was a dim light in the room, but by peering about, it was possible to distinguish objects. For instance, all present could discern the oil painting of the father of Hugh Hel-

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version which hung in its accustomed place over the fireplace. Even in the semi-darkness the eyes of that counterfeit presentment seemed to glare out with a force and distinctness which had been characteristic of the dead inventor. Also, the dull light cast its rays upon the large rug which covered the entrance to the room, two or three feet from the doorway.

Barnes busied himself in examining the shutters, and in making final preparations for his experiment. When he had finished, he turned to the others and said:

“I have endeavored to place this house in precisely the condition it was on the night when Hugh Helverson entered and met his fate. I have been particular to see that every door in the rear has been bolted and every window locked. The front door, of course, is deadlocked, and may be opened from the outside with a latch key. If you gentlemen desire to investigate these things for yourself, you are at liberty to do so.”

There was silence after this, and then the voice

of Captain Mayne could be heard as he said in a tone of irony:

“Go ahead, Barnes. We are sure that you have nothing concealed up your sleeves. But I wish you would hurry the show for I have important business to look after.”

“The show — as you call it — will begin as the clock strikes the hour of midnight. A gentleman of my acquaintance has consented to impersonate Hugh Helverson, and will endeavor to repeat what we suppose were his movements on that fatal night.”

A hush fell over the assemblage — a hush that cast a sort of awe over all present. A sob came from the lips of Hilda Helverson. It was a hysterical cry and gave a faint notion of the strain under which she was laboring. The quiet, the semi-darkness and the nervousness of the participants gave the affair the appearance of a spiritualistic seance. The ticking of the clock on the mantel was the only sound to relieve the tenseness of the moment. Suddenly a cry burst forth from Captain Mayne:

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"Hold on there, Barnes — there's something missing."

"What do you mean?" asked the investigator.

"I mean that Conan Williams is not here. He's the most important one of all. To give this performance without Williams is like presenting "Hamlet" without the Dane. Besides, you promised me that he would be here. I suppose it's all right, but it looks mighty queer. If he couldn't stand the strain —"

"It is all right," assured the detective; "I said that Williams would be here, and he will be. Just be patient."

After this outburst, all became quiet again. The seconds passed by with leaden-like slowness. Even in the gloom it was plain that the thing was getting on the nerves of the participants. Just when it had reached the breakable point, the clock in a near-by steeple struck the hour of midnight. Before the last stroke pealed forth the little time piece on the mantel rang out twelve times. As it ceased the silence, by contrast, seemed more tense.

Suddenly a sound of footsteps on the porch attracted attention. There was a scratching around the keyhole, and the next moment they knew that the door was being opened. Through the gloom they saw the figure of a man with his hat drawn down over his eyes. He turned and closed the door and carefully bolted it. Then he advanced with deliberation. As his face was turned to the inside, they recognized the newcomer as Conan Williams. He stepped upon the large rug and the moment he did so there was a loud explosion, accompanied by a cloud of smoke, and they saw that he had been struck upon the breast, just in the region of the heart, by a black object.

Barnes and Clancy turned up the lights and every one else leaped forward. Williams stood there uninjured, gazing at the picture of the father of Hugh Helverson. The gaze of all present followed him and they saw a little stream of smoke issuing from one of the eyes in the picture. The detective rushed forward and raised the rug and they saw a tiny wire in the floor that led to the wall and from thence back

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of the picture above the mantel piece. Before any one could speak, Barnes exclaimed :

“ Now, gentlemen, you may all look upon the solution of the mystery of the bolted door ! ”

While he spoke he removed the portrait, and behind it, with the smoke still curling toward the ceiling, they beheld a pistol carefully balanced so that its muzzle must have been directly behind the left eye of the picture.

Barnes briefly told them how the whole thing had been contrived. The inventor, fearful that some one might enter the house in his absence and steal the secret of the submarine destroyer, had constructed a device which meant death to the one that stepped upon the rug. It was ingenuity almost supernatural.

“ Unfortunately,” concluded the old investigator, “ Hugh Helverson was the victim of his own contrivance. Filled with the thought that his great invention had at last been completed, he came here forgetful of the trap he had set to catch the one that might try to pilfer his idea.”

“ But Williams’s quarrel with Helverson,” interjected Mayne, “ what about that? And why was he lurking about the house? ”

“ That quarrel came about because Helverson refused to agree to his marriage with his daughter,” replied Barnes, quietly, “ and he came here on the fateful night to renew his request for the girl’s hand. But at the last moment, his heart failed him and he left without speaking to Helverson. There was really no reason why he should not have told you this, but he is young and chivalrous, and he felt that it would not be fair to Miss Hilda to reveal the unfortunate domestic episode.”

It was a saddened, but satisfied, group that left the little cottage shortly after midnight. Hilda Helverson was weeping silently, her grief over the death of her father strangely mingled with the joy over the acquittal of the man she loved. Captain Mayne tried to forget his chagrin over his admiration for the cleverness of the detective.

“ You said ‘ find the motive and you will find the man,’ ” he remarked to Barnes, with just a trace

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of complaining in his voice, "but I don't exactly see the connection in this case."

"The connection is perfect," said the veteran, "and it came to me when I read the biography of Helverson in the copy of 'Who's Who.' When I read there that he was the inventor of a contrivance to catch burglars I got my first clew — a clew that became perfectly clear when I discovered that one of the eyes of the portrait had been shot away. It was a trifle, but upon such trifles have hinged the solution of many of the world's strangest mysteries."

III

ADVENTURE OF THE SCRAP OF PAPER

BROMLEY BARNES and Admiral Hawksby sat on either side of a flat-topped desk in the Navy Department, talking in low, earnest tones. The grizzled face of the old sea fighter looked sterner than usual, while the attentive, earnest countenance of the veteran investigator indicated that he fully appreciated the importance of the communication which was being made to him. The purport of it was simple enough, and sufficiently alarming to call for prompt action. The secrets of the Department were being peddled to the enemy. Orders, that were presumably known to only three persons in Washington, were finding their way to hostile quarters with a rapidity and a certainty that was almost uncanny.

"We've got to locate the leak, Barnes," said the admiral, emphasizing the remark with a resounding

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blow on the desk with his closed fist, "or I'll feel like handing in my resignation."

An incredulous laugh came from the bald-headed man with the fringe of iron-gray hair which encircled his head with a halo-like effect.

"Resign," he retorted; "that sounds like retreat, and I didn't think that word had any place in the vocabulary of the man who ran the blockade —"

"Never mind that," hastily interrupted Hawksby, who feared the usual eulogy for the gallant action which had won him a gold medal and the thanks of Congress; "you know what I mean. I feel so impotent in this underhand business that I scarcely know what to do. If it was an out-and-out, face-to-face fight, I'd know just how to act. I'm depending on you to get to the bottom of the thing. Will you help me?"

"Yes," was the prompt reply, "but you've got to help me first. Now, you say the last message that was intercepted related to the movements of the Asiatic fleet. Please let me see a copy of the order."

The admiral pressed a button on the desk, and in

a few moments a young man, with coal black hair and brown skin, entered the room.

"Lee," said the sailor, "get me the order book. I think you will find it in the copying press."

As the Admiral sat stroking his mustache and imperial, Barnes looked at him curiously

"Who is that man?" he asked.

"That chap — oh, that's a West Indian who acts as a sort of personal servant to me."

"Do you mean to say that he has access to the copy book and is given the run of the place?"

Hawksby drew himself up stiffly.

"I don't know what you mean by the 'run of the place' — and, besides, the orders are in code and would be Greek to him or any other man except to myself and the Secretary of the Navy."

Presently the messenger returned, and for the next ten minutes the two men were deeply engrossed in the intricacies of the naval code and the details of how the orders had been transmitted. Barnes asked a hundred and one questions and finally departed with the intimation that he might return and ask

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some more before he started in on his difficult task.

“It all depends upon circumstances,” he said, “and, in the meantime, I’m going to take a long walk to get the cobwebs out of my head.”

He went to his apartments near the Capitol first, and gave some general orders to his assistant and general factotum. He consulted a number of maps and then he started out on one of the long strolls which had made him as familiar with the streets of the National Capital as the famous Caliph was with the equally celebrated city of Bagdad.

No member of the Cabinet, and not one of the foreign diplomats at Washington could have been more fastidious in his dress than this investigator who had come from his retirement to assist his Government during a critical stage in its history. The frock coat, the carefully creased trousers, the gray spats, the opal in his green tie, and the tightly rolled silk umbrella which took the place of a walking stick, were all just as they should be — or at least, just as Barnes felt they should be. He walked up one street and down another, thinking all the

while of the problem that had been given into his care. A stranger, noting the cold gray eyes and the quizzical smile, would have thought him a man without a care in the world. He must have been walking for an hour when his steps led him into that section of the city known as Farragut Circle. He noticed, in a casual way, that an automobile was standing in front of one of the houses. And then an incident, seemingly insignificant in itself, roused all of his thinking faculties.

The driver of the car had taken the cover from a sandwich. Instead of tossing it aside he carefully rolled the oiled paper into a little ball and threw it on the sidewalk. At the same moment a nattily dressed man with a waxed mustache and a pink carnation in the buttonhole of his stylish coat, came down the steps of the house and picked up the discarded bit of paper. He looked up and down the street in a nervous manner, as if to make sure that he was not observed, and then turning briskly, reëntered the house. The incident did not take a minute, but to the watching Barnes it was like a

drama itself. Instantly the driver of the car put his foot on the lever of the machine and it whizzed away. But in that brief time the detective had obtained the number of the machine and a mental picture of the chauffeur. He noted the number and location of the house, and then, with his quizzical smile broadening, hastened to his own apartment.

On the morning after the incident of the oiled paper, a new janitor appeared at the apartment house on Farragut Circle. He wore a blouse and overalls and seemed to fit into the scheme of the place much better than the house itself did with the richer and more pretentious dwellings with which it was surrounded. The new tyrant of the place was most industrious and showed a desire to please that was truly amazing upon the part of a modern janitor. His round face and bald head were smudged with soot and dirt, and his features were all but recognizable. But even the evidence of praiseworthy toil could not change the cold, gray eyes and the quizzical smile which were a part of the personality of Bromley Barnes. He made friends with every-

body — especially the women and children — and he had the run of the house, which was to be expected in one who was presumably charged with its destinies.

In twenty-four hours the new janitor was familiar with the place and its occupants. No matter how unkempt he might seem himself, he showed a real desire to keep the house tidy. Residents were delighted to find a man who was willing to carry off the contents of their waste paper baskets and trash cans, and they were united in designating him as “a jewel” of a janitor. On the evening of the second day the new man sat in his quarters in the basement of the house smoking a corn-cob pipe and looking the picture of contentment. But later that night, when most of the guests were sleeping the sleep of the just, the janitor had pulled down the blinds of his own modest apartment and was restlessly pawing over scraps of paper that had been found in the waste baskets.

For more than an hour he worked there, with a patience and a persistence beyond all praise. At the

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end of that time he began to show signs of weariness. But just when he seemed ready to quit, he gave a cry of delight. He had found a little scrap of oiled paper, twisted and rolled into a tiny ball. Slowly and carefully he unrolled it and spread it out on the little wooden table. It contained several typewritten lines which the old man found some difficulty in deciphering. But the hardest task has its end and finally he was able to read these significant words:

“Gunboats *Philadelphia* and *Newark* have been ordered to join the Asiatic fleet. 200 jackies have been assigned to special duty in this connection. Ammunition in large quantities is to be shipped. More details in the next twenty-four hours.”

Bromley Barnes gave a sigh of relief. He picked up the little scrap of paper reverently and placed it in his wallet. Then, with that quizzical smile hovering about his lips, he undressed and went to bed to enjoy a well-earned night's rest.

Things in the apartment house moved along in their accustomed grooves for some days. The man with the waxed mustache and pink carnation did not

appear to have any occupation, yet for a man without regular employment he seemed to be amazingly busy. Percival Roberts, for by that name he was addressed, had a room near the top of the house — an attic room that by no means corresponded with his careful dress and fastidious manners. He suggested a person who spends much time at the barber's, and regarded the manicuring of his nails as a sort of religious rite. Such a one was not likely to bestow much attention on a mere janitor, and when the bald-headed man with the cold gray eyes and the quizzical smile passed him on the stairs, Roberts did not even deign to throw a glance in his direction. There were many things that the wax-mustached person was not, but there was one thing he was — or thought he was — and that was a lady killer.

One morning he was coming out of the house when he passed a young woman with a singularly attractive face. She had taken an apartment on the third floor back and Mr. Percival Roberts made it his business to find out all about her. Gossip flows quite as freely in the modern apartment house as it

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formerly did in the less pretentious boarding house, and by putting this and that together, the young man learned a number of things. First, she was Miss Marie Johnson, and she had come from the far West for the purpose of attending an art school in Washington. Secondly, she had been quite as much taken with Mr. Percival Roberts as he had been with her. That was a hopeful beginning, and before long he had managed to make her acquaintance, and even offered to escort her to the institution where she proposed to take up the study of art. But she smilingly declined this on the ground that it was not wise to mix business with pleasure.

In less than a week, however, the acquaintance had prospered to such an extent that Miss Johnson accepted an invitation to accompany Mr. Roberts to the theater, and after that he pressed his suit with much ardor. She did not precisely repulse him, but she tried to make him understand that she had a serious purpose in life, and that she did not propose to be diverted from the plan which had brought her

to the National Capital. She let him know that she admired men with a purpose in life, and gently intimated that his indolent existence did not promise well for the woman who would consent to be his wife. The bald-headed man with the fringe of gray hair, and the cold gray eyes and the quizzical smile noticed the growing intimacy between the pair, and he merely shrugged his shoulders as much as to say that in the matter of love he could not be regarded as a competent authority. But Percival Roberts felt that when it came to the tender passion he was in his element, and he plainly was flattered at the evident impression he had made upon the studious young woman.

It was on the evening of the fifth day that Percival found himself in the cozy sitting room of Marie Johnson, making his first formal call. He found it very pleasant there. The apartment, furnished with exquisite taste, made an appropriate setting for the girl. She was not "beautiful" in the usually accepted sense of that much-abused word. But she was undeniably fascinating. He took in every de-

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tail of the picture — and it satisfied him. Her coal black hair, parted in the middle, and glowing with life and vitality, her dark, gray eyes, full of spirit and intelligence, and the masterful manner — always feminine — in which she carried herself, convinced Percival that here at last was the one girl in the world for him. They talked of indifferent topics for some time, and finally the young man, taking her shapely hand in his, began to declare his passion. She did not withdraw her hand, neither did she show any inclination to encourage his words. There was just the right degree of modesty mixed with friendliness.

“My dear,” he began, “you have my happiness in your keeping. Marie, I want to ask —”

But at this point there was a terrific hooting of an automobile horn just outside the apartment house. To the surprise of Marie, the ardent wooer dropped her hand, and rising, walked over to the window. One look was sufficient, for turning to her, he exclaimed:

“Pardon me, I’ll be back in a moment.”

Before Marie realized what was going on, he had grabbed his hat and hurried from the room. She did not betray any emotion, disappointment or otherwise, but she evidently possessed the curiosity of her sex, because she went to the window and, raising the sash, looked below. It was worth while, for a curious performance was being enacted. An automobile had halted in front of the house. The driver had just finished taking the covering from a sandwich. Instead of tossing the oiled paper to one side, he rolled it into a small ball and then threw it, with great deliberation, over on the sidewalk. At the same moment, Mr. Percival Roberts, descending the steps of the house, reached over and picked up the discarded paper. The automobile, with a farewell honk-honk, dashed away, while Roberts, with simulated indifference, reentered the house.

Marie closed the window and sat down and awaited the return of the young man. Five minutes and then ten passed, and still he did not come back. Presently, with a look of determination on her face, she left the room and ascended the staircase in the

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direction of his apartment. It did not take long to reach the entrance to his attic room. The door, fortunately, was slightly ajar, and without the slightest compunction Marie pushed it open and entered.

Roberts was not there. The room was empty. She glanced about hastily and noted the bareness of its furnishings. There was a small cot in a corner of the attic, but it seemed out of place because the room was fitted up more like an office than a place of habitation. A roll-top desk was against the wall and it was open, showing a mass of papers in much confusion as though the owner had left in a hurry. What did it all mean? Where had Percival Roberts gone? What was his occupation, and what was the meaning of his sudden agitation? Presently Marie noticed a light screen that shut off one corner of the attic. She had gone too far to retreat, and walking over, she moved the obstruction. She gave a gasp because she saw revealed a flight of steps, leading to a trap door that looked out on the roof. Slowly and cautiously she began to climb the ladder and

continued until her head emerged into the outside air.

“Zip-zip-zip” came from nearby, followed by a spluttering sound. She looked in that direction, and saw Roberts, his face white and concentrated, working at an instrument. Like a flash, the truth dawned on her. It was a wireless telegraph outfit and he was the operator. Summoning all her strength, she climbed on to the roof and stood there, supporting herself by holding on to the edge of the trap door. At that moment he looked up and saw her standing there like an accusing spirit. His face went white and his voice trembled:

“What are you doing here?”

The color had vanished from her countenance too, and her eyes danced with excitement. Nevertheless, she managed to speak composedly:

“That is the very question I was going to ask you. What are you doing up here like a thief in the night?”

He had evidently finished with his telegraphing, because he threw a cover over the outfit and ad-

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vanced toward her in a threatening way. Her words had cut him like a whip, and he approached her shakily. Bewildered rage and childish fright seemed to be struggling for the mastery. He grabbed her by the wrist, and when he spoke again, it was in a thick, husky voice:

“What do you mean by spying on me — what do you mean by creeping up that ladder — what are you doing here, anyhow?”

She gave a long-drawn breath before she replied. Her hand, holding the edge of the trap door, trembled in spite of her effort to be composed, but presently she spoke in a voice that had a note of pathos in it.

“Don’t — don’t you think that you are the one to explain? You leave me without a word of warning, and when I come to find you, I find you out on the roof, acting — acting like a criminal.”

He pulled himself together. The look of half-dazed fury left his face. He loosened his hold on her wrist and spoke in low, tender tones:

“Forgive me, Marie. I — I lost control of my-

self. You scared me for a moment. I'm sorry. Say that you'll forgive me for my nasty outbreak."

She looked up at him with humid eyes. She seemed to be seeing him through a mist. But this passed quickly and she said:

"That's very well, but it doesn't explain anything."

He placed her arm about her waist, and began to assist her gently down the rude ladder. He closed the trap door, and presently they stood facing one another in that attic room. The seconds seemed like minutes, and when he spoke it was in a slow voice, as though the words were being dragged from his reluctant lips:

"Marie, I'm going to tell you what I would not tell another living soul. But — but you are entitled to know it. You have often asked me to tell you my occupation. You wondered what I did for — for a living. I'll tell you. I'm engaged in secret service work."

He had locked the door before he began to speak, and she stood there now with her delicate fingers

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nervously handling the knob. She seemed to be quivering with terror. Then she raised a white hand and pointed it at him in a shaky manner.

“ You — you mean to say that you are a spy ? ”

His face reddened. That look of bewildered rage returned for a second, and then he said doggedly :

“ You can put it that way if you want to do so.”

She stood for a moment, swaying with fright. Her voice was very low, and it quivered :

“ And in the face of this, you have dared to make love to me — you pretended to care for me.”

He rushed over to where she stood and threw his arms about her in frantic fashion.

“ Oh, Marie, can't you see that I have been doing it for you — can't you see that I have been trying to earn the reward that will make us independent? I care for you more than anything in the world. If you care for me, nothing else matters. Say that I am forgiven. Say that you will be my wife.”

Her face hardened at that, and she spoke with determination, with that air of decisiveness which he had admired in her so much.

"If you care for me as much as you say, you will tell me everything. Tell me the truth. You must keep nothing from me. You were working against the United States, against your own country. Isn't that a fact?"

"Don't put it that way. I'll tell you everything. I have been representing another nation. You speak of my country. What does that mean? I owe nothing to the country. It has not even given me the chance of making a decent living. And patriotism! What is that? Merely a word. The work I have been doing will give me the means to keep you in comfort. We can go away and live in comfort for the rest of our lives."

"But a traitor," she murmured, "to be married to a traitor!"

"Please don't talk like that," he implored, "and think only that I am doing it for you. The thing we do for love cannot be wrong. And, Marie, I love you so much."

She melted at that and looked at him in a way that seemed to say that she might forgive the of-

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fense for the sake of the love. He grasped at his opportunity as a drowning man grasps at a straw. He led her to a chair and then began to fumble among the papers on his desk. Presently he secured a number of them in a package and he waved them in front of her dark gray eyes.

“Look!” he exclaimed, “these few pieces of paper carry with them the power to give us wealth and happiness for the rest of our lives. Promise me that you will say nothing of what you have seen. In a few days all will be well, and then we may go away and be happy with each other. You want to be happy, don’t you?”

“Yes,” she said softly, “I want to be happy.”

“Ah,” he shouted gayly, “I was sure that you were a sensible woman; I realized that from the start!”

She looked very tired standing there. There were dark circles under her lustrous eyes, and her chin seemed to quiver from weariness and excitement. She looked at him appealingly.

“Now,” she said in a half whisper, “if you will

unlock the door, I will go to my own room. I need rest."

He moved as if to comply with her request, but at that instant there came a sharp, peremptory knock on the panel of the door. He opened it quickly, and a smallish man, with coal black hair and brown skin, confronted him. The visitor was agitated and he spoke hurriedly:

"We have been discovered. They know about the wireless. The police are likely to be here at any moment. Get away!"

As he uttered the last word, the black-haired, brown-skinned man turned and ran down the stairway. Marie had heard all, and she looked the picture of fright and terror. Roberts' eyes had narrowed as he received the message, but when he noted the fear in her eyes he put his arms around her in a comforting way.

"It's all right, little girl. We have reached the end of the chapter, but we won't go away empty handed."

He hastened to the desk and picked up a small

packet of papers. He fondled them as one might a favorite child. He looked up with cupidity and triumph in his face.

“They’ve discovered the wireless, but it’s too late to prevent the damage. I’ve got enough here to shake the whole Department of State, not to speak of the Navy. And there’s a fortune in it for us. And don’t be frightened. I’ll take care of you.”

He moved toward her, and with a smothered cry she clung to his shoulders. He saw that she was white about the lips, and he could feel that she was trembling. As they stood thus a gust of wind swept beneath the closed door and rustled a bit of paper on the floor. She gave a cry of terror and he let out an oath.

“I’m like a skittish horse,” he said, half apologetically, “but it will be all right. We’ll have to make a quick get-away. I’ll call a taxicab and we’ll shoot off to the Union Station.” He looked at his watch. “We’ve just got time to catch the southern train. Before they know it, we’ll be at El Paso,

and then, once across the border and on Mexican soil, I'll defy the whole bunch to get me."

He was tossing articles of clothing into a grip by this time, and then he paused for a moment to say to Marie:

"You'd better go to your room and get a few things together. We'll only have a few minutes. Hurry. I'll have the cab by the time you're ready."

The girl seemed to be more composed by this time. She looked at him with a glance of endearment.

"Percival," she said softly — and the first mention of his given name from her lips thrilled him — "I'll try to be useful. I'll call the cab."

He was delighted beyond measure by her acceptance of the situation. He stooped down and kissed her on the lips. That one act seemed to change the whole character of the enterprise. Instead of a fugitive from justice, he felt like a man about to enter on his honeymoon.

"Do so," he murmured in return, "and by the time it is here I will be all ready for you."

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During the next few minutes there were scenes of feverish activity in that apartment house on Faragut Circle. Percival Roberts lived in a Heaven of his own creating. He pictured himself and his beloved in a far-away land enjoying the fruits of his "hard work." But in the midst of his day dreaming he roused himself to the actualities. If the police were on the way he did not have much time to spare. He finished his preparations in record time, and started down stairs to meet Marie. To his satisfaction, the door of her room was open and he saw her standing there, attired for a journey, and looking as neat and as pretty as anything he had seen in a long while. He gave a sigh of joy. His cup of happiness was full indeed.

She was fastening her gloves as he entered the room, and she gave him a smile that thrilled him. Quite evidently her scruples had vanished and she was going to imitate him by making the most of her life. He felt flattered, and as he tried to put his thought into words she interrupted him to say prettily, and with just a shade of deference:

"Percival, the cab is at the door now — and we'd better not lose any time."

"Very well, my dear," he replied, "we'll make tracks." But in spite of his hurry he paused to admire her costume. She was dressed like a bride — that is to say, in the traveling costume usually affected by the newly wedded. And added to this was a stylish coat that came almost to her shoe tops. As he gazed at this garment it seemed to give him an inspiration.

"Marie," he said, "have you a pocket on the inside of that coat?"

She had and she displayed it with the pride with which members of the gentler sex usually exhibit their articles of clothing. Percival looked the satisfaction he felt. He drew the package of papers from his own pocket and handed them to her.

"I want you to put them in your inside pocket," he suggested, "and then I'll know they are in no danger of being lost."

She complied with this request, smilingly, and as she buttoned her coat carefully he surveyed her for

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the fifth time with intense pride and an undisguised sense of ownership.

“Before you took those papers,” he cried, banteringly, “I thought you were the loveliest girl in the world. Now, you’re that and more. You are the most valuable. You’re worth your weight in gold. Those papers are worth millions to the enemy and they mean wealth and comfort for us. I’m sure you’ll guard them — especially if anything should happen to me.”

She gently boxed his ears.

“Don’t talk like a pessimist,” she cried; “it’s not a bit like you — and, besides, there’s a machine out there tooting away for dear life.”

Two minutes later they were seated in the taxicab to the relief of the driver who grumbled something about having to wait all day for people that didn’t know the value of time. That seemed to amuse Percival, who grimaced at the fellow behind his back and whispered to Marie that time at that moment was the most important thing in his life. He looked at his watch and said to the girl:

"We've got twenty minutes, and I think it would be wise to make a circuit instead of going directly to the station. Then, if by chance we should be followed, we can throw them off the scent."

She laughed gayly.

"You're the most cautious man I ever met. They'll never catch you napping. But do just as you please, my dear."

Accordingly he gave direction to the green-gog-gled chauffeur, who resolutely kept his back to his passengers as if still resenting the indignity of having to wait. But he nodded that he understood his orders, especially the one which directed him to let his two passengers off about a square from the Union Station.

"That may keep them from knowing that we actually went to the station," he whispered with a sagacious look at the girl.

The drive took them beyond the White House, and then past the Army and Navy Building and the Treasury Department. The driver kept mumbling to himself as though he were questioning the sanity

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of any one driving about the city at random while the automatic clock was registering a fare that might appal any one except a bride and groom. As they passed the Navy Building a little man was seen entering a conveyance.

“That’s Admiral Hawksby,” explained Roberts to his companion; “he’s going home now after what he calls a ‘hard day’s work.’ He’ll be the sorest man in Washington when he hears of my escape. But it serves him right, the arrogant old ass. He thinks he knows it all, and he doesn’t know anything.”

For five minutes after that the man and the girl simply sat and admired each other. It was a real mutual admiration society, with only two members. Marie Johnson certainly looked attractive. Her coal black hair, parted in the middle, contrasted with the coquettishness of her face, and her dark gray eyes sparkled in the half gloom of the cab. Percival complacently stroked his mustache and leaning toward her, said tenderly:

“I’ll mark this day down as the luckiest day of

my life — the day you insured my happiness. And if I only thought you fully reciprocated my feelings —”

“I do,” she interrupted, “I do — and as soon as I can get one I’m going to put a red mark around the date on the calendar.”

They both laughed at this conceit, and after that there was a blissful silence. It was broken by the voice of the girl, speaking seriously and with a certain pathos :

“You’ve been very frank with me, Percival. There is something I should tell you.”

He interrupted her with a loyalty that astonished even himself. He had not thought he was capable of such high flights.

“Never mind about your past, Marie — I don’t want to hear a word.”

“Oh, it isn’t anything terrible,” she retorted with feminine inconsistency; “I simply wanted you to know that before I came to this city I was an actress. Do you mind?”

Roberts laughed heartily.

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"Mind? Well, I should say not. I should say it was a sort of distinction. And I'll bet my bottom dollar you were a mighty clever actress."

"Well," she said reflectively, "I know I wasn't dismissed for incompetence."

By this time the outlines of the Union Station began to loom in sight. Percival looked ahead and prepared to alight as soon as the cab drove up to the curb. On and on they went until they were within a block of their destination. The spy uttered an exclamation of impatience and called to the driver:

"Hey, out there — didn't I tell you to stop before we got to the station?"

But the taxi went right ahead as though nothing had been said. The young man half arose in his seat. Marie turned to him with a look of alarm.

"What's the trouble? You mustn't do that while the machine is in motion."

Roberts fell back into his seat with a muttered oath.

"It's that infernal driver. He's so stupid that he doesn't know enough to do as I tell him. Well,

I guess we'll have to go into the station after all."

But, strangely enough, the taxicab did not go into the regular driveway of the station. Instead, it circled around the building and paused in front of the entrance to a small room. The driver jumped from his seat and opened the door. Percival Roberts alighted first, and then assisted Marie to the ground. He turned to give the driver a piece of his mind for his stupidity, but that personage, with unlooked for insolence, gave him a push and sent him into the little room. Percival was furious and he doubled up his fist menacingly. As he did so he noticed a figure in the half-darkened room. It gave him a start — and no wonder, for it was Admiral Hawksby, stroking his mustache and imperial, and with deep satisfaction depicted on his grizzled face.

Roberts was scared, but he kept his self-possession. The presence of the old sea fighter might be merely a coincidence. He turned around to the driver of the taxicab, and as he did so the stupid one tossed

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away his glazed cap and took off his green goggles. The spy looked at the other man with half-dazed fury.

He was staring into the face of Bromley Barnes — special investigator of the United States Government.

Bewilderment filled his mind. Then gradually he rallied. He looked around the room. The Admiral and the detective were looking at him curiously. Presently his eyes fell upon Marie Johnson. She stood by a table in the center of the room, and she seemed to be trembling like a leaf. Her head was buried in the folds of her coat and her breast heaved convulsively. He remembered that the incriminating papers were in the inside pocket of her coat. In that instant his resolution was formed.

“Well, gentlemen,” he said, fingering the pink carnation in his coat, and with that nonchalant smile which he could assume so quickly, “what is the meaning of this?”

Barnes grinned at him amiably.

“ We wanted to be sociable — we couldn’t bear to see you go off without saying good-by. We’ve already got Lee Hallman and the code man.”

Roberts smiled in return, but his brain was working furiously. He looked again in the direction of Marie. She seemed to be trying to control her emotions. At any moment she might break down. He must anticipate anything she might say. In those seconds of thought any affection he might have felt for her vanished into thin air. He felt a new emotion — and yet it was not new. It was as old as the everlasting hills. It was the impulse of self-preservation. He was willing to sacrifice anything and any one to save himself. He moistened his lips with the tip of his tongue, and steadying himself, said slowly :

“ Well, gentlemen, you’ve anticipated me a little bit, but still I think I can claim credit for helping my country.”

The detective looked at him in a puzzled way. When he spoke it was brusquely :

“ What in thunder are you talking about? ”

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In reply to this question, Percival pointed an accusing finger in the direction of Marie.

“Simply this. I have arrested that woman as a spy and I now desire to transfer her to your custody. I still have some evidence to get, but I will appear against her in the morning.”

The woman, who had been standing, sank into a chair, as if in total collapse. She buried her face in her hands and refused to look up.

Bromley Barnes gazed at the man with a curious smile hovering about his lips. He spoke in a voice of authority:

“Young man, it is one thing to accuse and another to prove. Where is the proof of what you say?”

Percival Roberts took a turn up and down the room before replying. He was considering the dramatic effect of what he was about to say. Then he pointed his hand at the girl for the second time and exclaimed loudly:

“Search her and you will find a number of messages that have been intercepted from the Navy Department. They are in the inside pocket of her

coat. I saw her put them there, and I am willing to so testify in a court of law!"

Something like a sob was heard to come from the woman with the bowed head and then the murmur in a muffled voice:

"Oh, Percival, how could you?"

Several speechless seconds passed. A dramatic tableau was being enacted in the little room. Admiral Hawksby broke the silence with one brusque sentence:

"Well, Barnes, why don't you search the woman?"

The cold gray eyes of the investigator softened just a little bit, and the quizzical smile became more pronounced, but he went over to Marie and commanded her to arise. She did so and he unbuttoned her coat, and took out the packet of letters from the inside pocket. As he read them his eyes widened and he emitted a low, significant whistle.

"Are these all of the papers?" he asked the girl.

"Yes," was the reply with downcast eyes, "all that I know anything about."

Percival Roberts had been watching her intently, and her manner seemed to reassure him, for turning to Barnes, he exclaimed :

“ You see, I’ve told the truth, and now if you’ll excuse me for the present, I’ll appear at your office the first thing in the morning.”

Barnes looked at him with a sort of contempt, and then producing a whistle, blew it softly. Two officers rushed into the room, and the next thing Roberts knew he was on the floor of the patrol wagon. He managed to regain his feet just as the Admiral, the Detective and the Girl came out of the railroad station. He turned to one of the officers and pointed in the direction of the trio.

“ Who —” he spluttered, “ who is that woman going down the street ? ”

The policeman shaded his eyes with one hand in order to get a better view of the girl, and then replied, in the most matter-of-fact way :

“ That ? That’s Miss Johnson — the smartest little woman in the United States Secret Service.”

IV

ADVENTURE OF THE STOLEN MESSAGE

BROMLEY BARNES cackled with delight. He sat before the blazing logs in his cozy quarters overlooking the dome of the Capitol, and fondled a very, very old book. It was a copy of the first edition of "Robinson Crusoe," published April 25, 1719, and was in three parts, the third part containing "The Serious Reflections," wherein the author uses Crusoe as his mouthpiece to express his sentiments on morals and religion. The venerable investigator smoothed the cover of the volume as though it were a living thing.

"I tell you, Clancy," he exclaimed, "the time is coming when I'll have the greatest known collection of old and rare editions of 'Robinson Crusoe.'"

"I guess you're right, sir."

"Guess — there's no guessing about it. Already

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I've collected two hundred separate editions of that one work."

"But what's the use," said Cornelius, rubbing his red head, "of having two hundred editions of the same book? Why not get one good edition and be done —"

"Ah," interrupted the old man, "you haven't the heart of a true collector. If you had, you'd know the joy of suddenly coming across a volume for which you'd searched for years. You haven't the heart of the simon-pure collector."

"No," admitted Con, with great directness and simplicity, "I've just got the heart of a simon-pure Irishman."

The ringing of the telephone bell interrupted the dialogue. Barnes answered it and when he hung up the receiver, his face was grave and thoughtful. Evidently something more important than "Robinson Crusoe" was on his mind.

"It's from the White House," he said. "His secretary intimates that the President would like to have me call and see him."

Clancy's eyes sparkled.

"That's a command, isn't it?"

Barnes laughed.

"You're right, and I'm going to take it in that spirit."

The President was exceedingly busy, and the fact that he set aside ten minutes of his time for an interview with the detective proved the importance of the call. He knew Barnes, and he made no apology for the fact that he had sent for him instead of the usual Secret Service men. He said that the great war and the critical situation which the United States was forced to face had made it necessary for him to send various special messages to Congress. On two separate occasions these messages, or rather the contents of the messages, were known to outside persons before they were read in Congress. The information and advice they contained had been used as the basis of stock market speculation. This had created a national scandal which could not be tolerated. The Chief Executive gave the old investigator a detailed description of his method of

preparing the State papers, and concluded by saying :

“ I am so anxious to get at the bottom of this thing, and so eager for an impartial inquiry that I have determined not to make it through any of the ordinary Government channels. I desire a thorough and independent investigation, and have concluded that you are the best man in the country for that purpose.”

Barnes bowed.

“ Mr. President, I appreciate the compliment and trust that I may prove worthy of your confidence.”

The head of the greatest nation on earth looked at the detective intently, and there was a glint of determination in the gray eyes.

“ Do your duty,” he said, “ and let no guilty man escape ! ”

The President turned his attention to pressing affairs of State, and Barnes was placed in the care of his private secretary. That young man, eager, loyal and bubbling over with the energy and enthusiasm

of youth, was even more anxious to solve the mystery than was his chief.

“My relations with the President are of such a confidential nature,” he explained, “that many persons would only be too glad to place the responsibility of the leak at my door.”

“When did the last leak occur?”

“With the sending of the Venezuelan message — we learned afterwards that it was known in Wall Street before it was read in Congress.”

“When did you first see the message?”

“When I read it in the newspapers.”

Bromley Barnes looked at the young man in surprise.

“Didn’t you assist the President in preparing the document for Congress?”

Wheatley shook his head and smiled happily.

“I am glad to say that I had nothing to do with it in any manner, shape or form. Neither did any member of the Cabinet. The President was the only living person that had any knowledge of what it contained.”

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"But how was it written — surely some stenographer was employed in its transcribing."

Once again the young man shook his head.

"It may not be known to the general public, but the President is an expert stenographer and typewriter, and he prepared and wrote the paper without assistance of any kind."

"Where did he do the work?"

"In a little apartment in the executive department. Come here and I'll let you see it for yourself."

The detective accompanied the private secretary to a small room which formed part of the Presidential suite. It was not much more than an entry way between two of the offices, but with the two doors closed, it insured complete privacy. In a corner was a typewriting machine in one of those tables which can be closed and used as a cover for the instrument. There was a book case on one side of the wall, filled with the usual works of reference. A filing cabinet, a waste paper basket, an arm chair, a couch and two ordinary cane-seated chairs com-

prised the furnishing of the apartment. The chubby-faced secretary gave an eloquent wave of his arm.

“Democratic simplicity all around you — doesn’t look much like a place for the hatching of plots, eh?”

“No,” said Barnes, looking about him with alert, eager eyes, “but is the general public permitted in this room?”

“Well,” replied the others, “that depends upon what you call the general public. Callers on the President pass through this room constantly. Senators, Representatives, heads of delegations, administrators of the various departments, and sometimes those who wish to return home and say they had the distinction of shaking hands with the Chief Executive of the Republic.”

“H’m,” murmured the detective, “I should say that you kept open house.”

Wheatley smiled.

“You must understand,” he protested, “that when the President is working in here no one is

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allowed in the room. That's the mysterious part of the business. The President came into this room alone, locked both doors, sat down at that machine and typed his own message. When he finished, he folded the page of typewritten matter, enclosed it in an envelope, put it in his pocket, and left the room. That was seven o'clock in the morning; not a soul was about. Even the cleaners who look after the executive department had not arrived. The President kept the document in his pocket until he read it at the special session of Congress at five o'clock in the afternoon. Yet the information in that message reached Wall Street before noon, and we hear that one man cleaned up a million dollars by trading on the right side of the market."

"It seems supernatural," commented Barnes.

"It's damnable!" ejaculated the loyal secretary, giving way to his indignation.

"Do you suppose," asked the detective, musingly, "that the clicking of the keyboard could convey anything to a person on the outside? You know prisoners in cells, when they happened to be tele-

graph operators, have talked to one another by tapping on the wall with a pencil."

Wheatley shook his head.

"I'm a stenographer and typewriter, and I know that the sounds from the keys are meaningless."

Barnes smiled.

"That's what I supposed, but you know we've got to consider every possibility."

As he spoke, he moved around the room and made a careful examination of each article. He looked on each shelf of the book-case; he investigated the couch, and finally he picked up the waste basket and examined each scrap of discarded paper that it contained.

"Tell me," he said presently, "the names of the men who habitually have access to this room."

The secretary paused and reflected. Then he began to tick off the names on the ends of his fingers.

"There's Senator Hance, of the Committee on Foreign Relations, Bert Stanley, the Associated Press representative, Charley Fisher, the executive

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clerk, Amos Brown, who cleans the offices, and — and myself.”

While he was talking Barnes was writing the names in a little memorandum book. The secretary looked at him curiously.

“What are you going to do — shadow them?”

The detective put the book in his vest pocket.

“Wheatley,” he said calmly, “in an investigation of this kind we’ve got to reverse the usual American procedure — we’ve got to consider every man guilty until his innocence is proven.”

The secretary nodded understandingly.

“Do you suppose,” continued Barnes, “that the President had any notes of his message which he might have afterwards discarded?”

“No, positively no,” was the emphatic reply. “He told me particularly that he used no notes, and that he carried the completed message away with him.”

While they were talking, a bearded man in a blue blouse, carrying a mop, came to the door of the room. He halted and turned as if to go away.

"Come on in, Amos," called the secretary, genially, and as he left the apartment, followed by Barnes, he added, "that's Amos Brown, one of the cleaners."

At the doorway they met a sallow-skinned, smooth-faced man who nodded to Wheatley and went into the room. The detective looked after him curiously.

"Who's that?" he asked.

"Charley Fisher, one of the clerks in the Executive Department. We've only had him a few months, but he's an invaluable man. Willing to work early and late and never complains. He's an all-round man, but we use him chiefly in carrying papers to and from the Capitol."

For the second time Bromley Barnes made a complete survey of the office. He examined every crack in the wall, and he minutely observed every bit of furniture and each article in the room. He held a whispered conversation with Secretary Wheatley and made certain requests to which the young man gave a ready assent.

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After that he hurried to his apartments overlooking the Capitol and handed Clancy the little book with the names of the individuals who were to be placed under surveillance. Then, to the amazement of his assistant, he threw himself back into an easy chair and began reading his latest copy of "Robinson Crusoe." He noticed the puzzled look in the young Irishman's face.

"It's all right, Clancy. You go ahead and do as I've told you. In the meantime I'll get some inspiration from this book. You may not know it, but it's chock full of wisdom."

And so the red-headed one left him, looking like a man without a care in the world.

It was late in the afternoon when Clancy, having shown his credentials to Secretary Wheatley, was keeping a sharp lookout for all persons entering or leaving the little room in the Executive offices. The place was practically deserted and Amos Brown, the cleaner, was engaged in his humble but necessary work. He was old and he moved slowly. The watcher, half hidden behind a screen, wondered if

he would ever finish his task. Suddenly he became aware that another man was in the room. He wore overalls and a blue jumper, and his face and part of his bald head were smeared with dirt and grime. Evidently a second man had been assigned to this work, but Clancy wondered how he had obtained admission without his knowledge. He felt a twinge of self-reproach.

What would Bromley Barnes say, if he knew?

He resolved to make up for the lapse by renewed vigilance from that moment. Also, he determined to get a better look at the newcomer, and find out who had assigned him to the work. The new man seemed younger than Amos Brown, but he potted about with the same deliberation as the veteran. Clancy watched him very intently. For an ordinary cleaner, he seemed to display unusual curiosity about his surroundings. He pawed over the books in the rack, he poked the waste in the paper basket like a scavenger, and altogether acted in a reprehensible manner. Brown, who was near-sighted, did not seem to notice this and presently the two men were

seen to be chatting together as though they were life-long friends. After a little while, the new man placed his mop in a corner of the room and started for the door. When he reached there, Clancy blocked the way.

"How did you get in here?" demanded the red-headed one.

"Walked in, of course," mumbled the other, hanging his head.

He attempted to go past the vigilant sentinel, but Clancy grasped him by the arm.

"Not so fast," cried the young man; "look at me and answer my questions!"

The man lifted his head, and something in the gray eyes caused Clancy to give a gasp of surprise

"Bromley Barnes!" he ejaculated.

"Sure," was the smiling response, "and now, if you'll kindly make way for me, I'll hurry home and wash the grime of honest toil from my manly brow."

An hour later he was the bland, debonnair, cultivated, well-dressed Bromley Barnes the red-headed

and hopeful one knew so well. His eyes were dancing, and Clancy knew from that, better than any words, that he had obtained the initial clue which made him plunge into a mystery with confidence and enthusiasm. He waited for the information he knew was coming.

"Now, Con," said the old man after a brief silence, "if you'll just stick a revolver in your hip pocket and come with me, we'll pay a little call."

It was one of those clear, crisp winter days which make the blood tingle, and the two men walking along Pennsylvania Avenue, in the direction of the Treasury Department, seemed to taste the joy of living. It was a long walk, and presently the old man turned off into one of the side avenues which led into the residential section. They passed row after row of fine homes, and finally came to a neighborhood which had all of the appearance of being run down at the heel. Barnes paused in front of one of these dingy brick houses. On the sill of the front window was a weather-beaten sign, reading:

ERNEST ROSETTI
TEACHER OF THE PIANO

The detective mounted the wooden steps and pulled the knob of a bell that gave forth a squeaky sound. After some delay the door was opened and a poorly clad girl ushered them into a cold and sparsely furnished room. Barnes asked to see the professor, and the girl invited them to be seated while she delivered their message.

Left alone, they had an opportunity of studying their surroundings. An old-fashioned square piano stood in one corner. On the other side was a flat-topped table and a swivel chair. The table was covered with books and papers, and beside it was a waste-paper basket. Barnes walked over to the basket and fished out some bits of paper. He pieced them together on the flat table and, completed, they formed a page of the stationery used in the Presidential offices. The sheet was perfectly blank — free of writing. But on the edge of the page was the embossed inscription: "The White House." The sound of hesitating footsteps warned Barnes

that the man he sought was approaching. He hastily swept the bits of paper into the basket and resumed his place on the sofa. The door opened and a tall, thin man entered the room. He advanced slowly, and as he stood there in silence, Clancy realized that the newcomer was blind.

"Professor Rosetti, I believe?" said the detective, rising.

"Yes, sir," was the reply, in a harsh voice; "what can I do for you?"

"I understand," said the old investigator, in his smooth, purring tones, "that you teach the blind to read and I wondered if you would take a pupil. I'm told that you are the best exponent of the touch system in this country."

That last sentence had the desired effect. A smile overspread the face of the blind man and he sat down and invited his caller to do likewise. He had the long thin fingers of an artist and a musician, and he talked enthusiastically of what he had been able to accomplish with those wonderfully sensitive fingers. They chatted for fifteen minutes,

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and at the end of that time, Barnes promised to call again.

Once outside of the house, the detective slapped Clancy on the back in boyish fashion.

"This is easier than I expected," he cried in great glee.

"It's all Greek to me," grumbled the red-headed one, "and I cannot see what it's got to do with your case."

"You will see pretty soon," was the retort, "and, Con, you've got to help me to do a very disreputable thing."

"What is it?"

"We're going to rob a blind man," was the calm reply; "do you understand me? We're going to rob a blind man."

Barnes, grinning at the amazement of his assistant, walked a short distance away from the house, halting behind the friendly shadow of a tree box. From that point of vantage he could get a good view of the studio of Ernest Rosetti. At his direction, Clancy took his post on the other side of the street

from whence he could see any one that attempted to leave or enter the rear of the house. It was a long wait, but it was not a fruitless one. The shrewd detective knew that he had interrupted the blind man in the midst of some task, and he felt instinctively that "something" was about to happen. In the midst of his cogitations a boy rang the bell of the Rosetti house and was admitted. He came out in about two minutes and walked down the street whistling. Barnes gave the signal to Clancy, and the two men trailed after the youngster. When they reached a comparatively secluded spot the old man suddenly faced the boy.

"Now, son," he said, cheerfully, "let me have that message."

The boy drew back, startled, and looked for a way of escape. But Clancy was there, guarding the rear. Then, with a sagacity far beyond his years, the youngster let forth a series of unearthly yells. Unexpectedly a police officer rushed upon the scene. The old man and his assistant presented the appearance of a pair of abductors. But fortune favors the

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brave, for the moment the policeman caught sight of the detective, he saluted and said :

“ How are you, Mr. Barnes — what can I do for you? ”

The veteran heaved a sigh of real relief.

“ Hello, Hartley! ” he cried, cordially, “ you’re just in the nick of time. This young man has a message which I must see. Won’t you please convince him that it is my — my right to see it? ”

“ See here, young feller,” brusquely exclaimed the guardian of the peace, flattered at the opportunity of serving the famous investigator, “ you give that message to Mr. Barnes right away or I’ll take you to the lock-up.”

The boy was frightened anyhow, and the threat of imprisonment was the finishing touch. He put his hand tremblingly into his pocket and pulled out a long envelope. It bore a printed address: “ J. Percy Dekayne, Dekayne & Co., Bankers and Brokers.” Without any hesitation, the detective ripped open the envelope and brought forth a yellow sheet of paper at which he gazed with fascinated interest.

And no wonder, for this is what it contained:

SAM	EBN	LOU
LDP	UEQ	SFR
SGS	THT	OIU
CON	KKW	SAM

Barnes knitted his brows and scratched his head in perplexity. While he puzzled over the queer code, Clancy and Hartley stood on either side of the whimpering boy. The detective turned and looked at him curiously. The policeman evidently regarded this as a signal, for he said eagerly:

“Shall I lock him up, Chief?”

“That depends upon whether he will help the officers of the law,” replied Barnes, sternly.

“I—I don’t know what you want me to do,” gulped the innocent victim.

“What do you know about this letter?”

“I don’t know nothin’,” wailed the boy, “I’m just takin’ it to me boss.”

“Have you carried many messages from that house?”

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“Not so many — lately I’ve been goin’ there every week or so.”

While he was talking, Barnes was puzzling over the strange combination of letters on the piece of yellow paper. He turned it upside down and sideways. He held it up to the light, but that proceeding did not seem to add to his stock of knowledge. For a while he was silent. Suddenly he gave a shout of joy.

“I’ve got it!” he cried, “I’ve got it! It’s as plain as the nose on your face. Why, a child could read that.”

Clancy felt hurt. He had looked over the chief’s shoulders and he knew that he could not read it. But he said humbly enough:

“What are we going to do?”

“Do?” shouted the old man, merrily, his eyes dancing with a vision of victory. “Why, we’re going at once to the office of DeKayne & Co., and this young man is going to lead the way. You’ll go along too, Hartley. We may need your assistance.”

“I’m — I’m afraid to go back to the boss without

the letter," cried the boy, dabbing a dirty fist into one eye and then the other.

"Why, bless your young heart," retorted the detective, "you'll have a letter to hand him, and it will be this very one."

The boy's face brightened.

"How — how can I do it?" he asked.

"Why, I'll give it to you and you will place it in the hands of J. Percy DeKayne. You're a fine boy," concluded the veteran, "and some day when you grow up you may be President of the United States."

The office of DeKayne & Company was located on Fourteenth Street, and it did not take them long to reach it. It was rather an imposing establishment, and from the signs on the outside one learned that the firm maintained branches in New York, Boston and Philadelphia. The private office of J. Percy DeKayne was in the rear of the suite, and through the open door that gentleman could be seen at a desk looking sleek, well groomed and prosperous.

He was bald, stout and smooth-shaven. But even from a distance it was evident that his restless black eyes were constantly on the look-out for trouble. He had the air of a man who was perpetually watching for unseen foes. Before they walked into the office, Bromley Barnes handed the envelope to the boy.

“Just give that to Mr. DeKayne as if nothing had happened,” he said.

The youngster gave a whimper. He evidently stood quite as much in fear of his employer as he did of the representatives of the United States Government.

“But it’s open,” he protested; “what’ll I say about that?”

“Don’t say anything,” replied the detective; “we’ll do all the talking.”

The curious procession filed along the corridor and into the office. J. Percy DeKayne looked up in amazement. He frowned and arose with a flush of anger on his well-barbered face. He was not in the habit of having his privacy disturbed. But before

he spoke, he noticed the uniform of the policeman, and its significance caused the words to die on his lips. But his debonnair air did not desert him entirely. Instinctively he recognized Barnes as the head of the invading party and he turned to him with his accustomed authority.

"Well, sir," he said in a voice that was intended to be brusque, "to what am I indebted for this visit?"

The detective, instead of replying at once, sank back into a luxurious leather-covered chair.

"Your boy seems to have something for you," said the chief; "don't let us interfere with your business. We can wait."

For the first time DeKayne noticed his messenger holding the long envelope in his outstretched hand. He took it and saw that it had been opened. An expression of anger rose to his lips, but he smothered it. He pulled forth the sheet of yellow paper and looked at it in a dazed sort of way.

"This — this letter has been opened," he said finally.

"Yes," interrupted the detective, "it was opened by me — shall we say by mistake?"

J. Percy DeKayne moistened his lips with the tip of his tongue. Little beads of sweat were beginning to show on his ample forehead. He was silent for several seconds. Then he gave a hysterical little laugh.

"I confess that I do not know what you mean by opening a communication addressed to me. But you're heartily welcome to what you've found. I'm sure I don't know what it means. It looks like a silly April fool lark. I suppose some one's trying to have fun with me."

He held the yellow sheet between his fingers as he spoke, and in spite of his bravado, his hands trembled. Barnes slowly arose and approached the broker.

"Probably," he drawled, "I may help you to solve the puzzle."

"I wish you would," he said, hastily handing the paper to the old man.

Barnes moved in the direction of a convenient

electric light while Clancy, Hartley and the boy grouped themselves around him. DeKayne's eager, restless eyes were fairly dancing in his head. Suddenly he made a dash toward the open, the heavy office door closed with a bang, and there was the click of a key being turned from the outside. Barnes looked up from his yellow sheet of paper with the ghost of a smile on his shrewd face.

"Buncoed!" he ejaculated, "and by a four-flushing stock broker!"

Clancy rushed to the door but found that it was securely locked. He beat against it frantically with both his hands, but to no avail. Hartley looked around the room and discovered only one window in the rear, and that was guarded by heavy iron bars such as are usually found in banks. The walls were of brick, and the door leading into the room was of thick oak. They were as effectually imprisoned as if they had been in the cell of a penitentiary. The little pocket of an office in the back of that building could not have helped DeKayne more in this crisis if it had been built for the purpose.

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Clancy, Hartley and the boy were all hammering on the door now, and shouting to those on the outside to open it. But only the echo of their blows and shouts could be heard. It was solid wood, with no glass to relieve the deadly security. In the midst of the excitement, the calm voice of Bromley Barnes could be heard:

“What time is it?” he asked.

“Ten minutes of four,” spluttered Clancy, still pounding on the door.

“Be quiet for a few seconds,” said the chief, rebukingly.

The noise ceased and they all looked at Barnes in amazement. How could the man remain calm under such conditions? He was smiling to himself and nodding his head queerly. While they were wondering if he had lost his reason, he sat down before the desk, picked up the telephone receiver and asked for the Union Railroad Station. The connection made, he called for the special officer in charge of the station.

“Hello, Steve,” he said as quietly as though he

were ordering a cup of coffee, "this is Bromley Barnes. I want you to pick up a man who is likely to come into the station within the next few minutes. It is J. Percy DeKayne, of DeKayne & Co., stock brokers. You know him, do you? So much the better. He's fair, fat and forty-four. Yes, smooth-faced, black eyes, well-dressed and all the rest of it. Cover all the ticket windows. He'll probably buy a ticket for New York. But don't let him get out of Washington, or I'll never speak to you again. Yes, all right. I'll be with you in five or ten minutes."

He hung up the receiver, and turned to the others with a look of grim determination in his face.

"Now, boys," he said cheerfully, "let's all get together and see if we can't break that door down. It's pretty heavy, but I don't see how it can withstand this aggregation of weight and beauty."

Just when they had formed what Clancy afterwards called the "Flying Wedge," there was a scraping noise outside, the key was turned and the door opened. Barnes never hesitated to look at

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the faces of the amazed clerks, but rushed into the street. An automobile stood at the curb and the old man jumped into it, followed by Clancy and Hartley.

“This is a matter of life and death,” he shouted to the startled chauffeur; “drive to the Union Station regardless of the speed laws.”

The man hesitated for a second, but the sight of Hartley's uniform decided his doubt and he directed the machine around Fourteenth Street and thence into Pennsylvania Avenue. Those who witnessed that flight say that there was never anything like it before or since. It must have been about one minute before four when Barnes and his associates reached the station. They found DeKayne there handcuffed and in the custody of Steve Brady.

“You'll get honorable mention for this, Steve,” said the old man as he bundled his prisoner into the machine.

As the automobile started away, the fast express for New York puffed out of the station. DeKayne listened to the clanging of the locomotive bell as one

who hears the sound of his own doom, and thought longingly of what might have been if he had only had a little start.

“Where now, sir?” asked the chauffeur, who had been so suddenly commandeered.

Barnes gave him an address, and in a few minutes the machine halted in front of the residence of the blind music teacher. The detective went in, and in a little while came out leading Ernest Rosetti by the hand. Finally, they visited the home of Amos Brown, and added the White House cleaner to their prisoners.

“Now,” said the detective, laughingly, as they sped toward the station house, “we have the cleaner, the translator and the broker, the three graces that form the links in the most subtle chain of conspiracy in my experience.”

The following morning Bromley Barnes sat in the library of the White House, smoking a Presidential cigar. The Chief Executive of the nation looked at him admiringly:

“You’ve done wonderful work and cleaned this

matter up to my entire satisfaction, but I'm curious to know how you got your first clew."

Barnes looked thoughtfully at the ashes on the end of his perfecto, and said slowly:

"I'll tell you that gladly, Mr. President — but I suppose you would like to know the name of the real culprit?"

The distinguished statesman leaned eagerly in the direction of the detective.

"Indeed I would. Who was it?"

The veteran investigator smiled faintly and, lowering his voice, said:

"It was yourself."

Surprise was depicted upon the Presidential face, and there came a flash of annoyance.

"I'm afraid," he said, "that I do not fully appreciate your kind of humor."

"It's not humor, Mr. President; it's the simple truth. In order to guard your messages, you have been over-cautious. You will probably remember that when you did your typewriting you placed an extra sheet of paper in the machine for 'backing'

purposes. Every man that runs a typewriter understands this. Well, the paper you used was soft, and the machine itself was old and shaky. You had to hit the keys hard in order to get an impression. Well — you got it all right, not only on the first sheet, but on the sheet used for backing. You will probably notice, if you have preserved the originals, that the type made holes in some parts of the paper. In every case the indentations were unusually deep. The consequence was that the second sheet, the ‘backing’ or waste sheet, carried the marks of the type.”

“Well!” ejaculated the listener, a look of comprehension dawning upon his face.

“Now,” continued Barnes, “I don’t pretend that these second sheets could be read by every one with the naked eye. But regularly, after they were thrown into the waste basket, they were gathered by Amos Brown, the cleaner, and taken by him to Professor Rosetti, the blind musician. Rosetti has the sense of touch, like all of the blind, but in his case this sense is highly developed. With great care and

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infinite patience he was able to translate them, if I may use the word in this connection. Even when he was not able to read all of the words, he was able to get the sense or the trend of the document. He knew the effect the message would have upon the market — whether it would send stocks up or down, and this fact was regularly and faithfully transmitted to J. Percy DeKayne, the broker.”

“ Rosetti did this by means of a code which was agreed upon between them. This sheet of yellow paper I have in my hand will explain it. On the face of it we have twelve squares filled with meaningless letters. But in this one, for instance, the broker merely had to take the first letter in each square to be informed that now was the time to ‘ sell U. S. stocks.’ ”

“ Very ingenious,” commented the President, “ but was the blind man able to make out the code ? ”

“ The clerical part of the work was done by his daughter. He did the translating.”

As the two men arose, the head of the nation grasped the old investigator by the hand and, look-

ing into his clear, gray eyes, said with great deliberation :

“ Mr. Barnes, you have performed an invaluable service to me and therefore to your country.”

It was ten days after this that the veteran received an official-looking envelope from the United States Treasury Department. It contained a voucher to be signed in triplicate, and a check for one dollar and seventy-five cents as payment to Bromley Barnes for “ one day’s services ” as a cleaner in the Executive Department. The old man looked at it quizzically, and, turning to his assistant, said :

“ Clancy, I’m never going to have that check cashed. I’m going to have it framed and hung in my apartments as a reminder of at least one day’s good work that I was able to do for Uncle Sam.”

V

ADVENTURE OF THE BURNT MATCH STICK

THOSE who poke about in the great dust heap called history will find that some of the most amazing events in this very old world have come from the most trivial causes. And, by the same token, many of the mysteries which have perplexed the minds of mankind have been solved by the slenderest of clews.

For instance, Bromley Barnes had altogether dismissed business from his mind on that perfect morning in May when he took his green-colored motor car for a spin along the country roads about Washington. He was in fine fettle, and dressed with the precision of a bridegroom. His striped trousers were carefully creased, his waistcoat was the last word in haberdashery, and the opal in his green tie

seemed to reflect the exuberant and ever-changing moods of the veteran investigator. He had Clancy with him, of course, and as he fastened his cold, gray eyes on the young man he smilingly and quizzingly commented upon the passing scene. He pointed to a square brick building.

“That’s the new National Arsenal which the Government has built for the purpose of speeding up the manufacture of munitions of war. Two thousand men and women are working there. And the curious part of it is that they are natives of nearly every nation under the sun. They call the United States a melting pot — well, war is the fire that’s going to cause the pot to boil and do the melting.”

Clancy listened intently and thoughtfully. Presently he turned to Barnes.

“Chief, isn’t the Government running a big risk in having so many aliens in such an arsenal? You know there’s been a lot of plotting lately, and the country is full of foreign spies.”

The old man shrugged his shoulders.

“How can it be helped? Labor has never been

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as scarce since Washington crossed the Delaware. They must have the men and they've got to take the material that's available."

"But what precaution —"

"See, here, Clancy," interrupted Barnes, "you can ask more questions than a ten-year-old youngster. All I know is that Major North is the Commandant of the Arsenal. He lives about a mile up the road, and we'll stop and call on him. If you have any more questions, fire 'em at the Major. He's an old friend of mine — and a fine fellow into the bargain."

Presently they came in view of a striking Colonial house overlooking the river drive. It was not large, but it was a perfect example of early American architecture. The white shutters, the red bricks, and the green roof would have made it an object of interest anywhere. A well-kept lawn, with a mounted cannon, fronted the dwelling. Barnes and Clancy alighted and walked briskly up the graveled path leading to the entrance. Suddenly the door was thrown open and a young man,

in the uniform of a lieutenant of the United States Army, appeared. His face was as white as a sheet, and there was a startled look in his eyes.

“What’s the matter, Hale?” demanded Barnes.

“The Major,” exclaimed the young man, thickly, “the Major — he’s dead!”

Without waiting to hear any more, Bromley Barnes rushed past Lieutenant Hale and into the house, followed by Cornelius Clancy. There, in an arm chair, in front of his desk, in the large living room, sat Major North, the Commandant of the National Arsenal — quite dead.

The officer had leaned against the high-backed chair, and in his hands was a copy of a daily newspaper. If such a thing may be said of a dead man, it can be stated that he looked quite life-like. Barnes put his ear against the side of the soldier to listen for a possible heart beat. He heard none.

Lieutenant Hale had followed them into the room. Barnes turned to him now.

“What do you make of it?”

“I don’t know; I’m distracted, and I don’t know

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whether to say it's a natural death, or murder, or suicide.'

Barnes looked at him sharply.

"There's no indication of violence here."

"No, that's the mystery of it. I left him in perfect health and when I returned five minutes ago, it was to find him there — dead!"

"Has he complained lately?"

"Not about his health, but I know the responsibility of this Arsenal has weighed heavily upon him. He has been particularly disturbed over the storehouse, and has personally opened and closed it each day. No one could get in or out without his consent. He always carried the key himself."

Barnes, in spite of his sorrow over the unexpected death of his friend, had his wits about him and suggested that the coroner and a physician be sent for at once. The lieutenant, with a mournful smile, announced that he had already telephoned. While they were talking the two men arrived. The doctor made a careful examination of the body and said that, to the best of his belief, death had ensued from

natural causes. The coroner asked a number of questions, and was particularly impressed with the fact that the Major had died with a newspaper in his hands.

"I don't believe a formal inquest will be necessary. It's a case of heart disease," he said.

After the two had departed, Barnes took the newspaper from the stiffened fingers and laid it on the desk. Then he made a systematic examination of the floor surrounding the chair in which the dead body of the Commandant reposed. He got down on his hands and knees regardless of the creases in his trousers and the danger to his dignity. The floor was not tidy. There was the usual clutter of torn papers to be found in a busy office. Barnes looked at each bit separately before he cast it aside. In the midst of this débris was a Turkish cigarette. The detective placed this in his wallet and then resumed his search. After a time he came across a small match stick, partly burned. It was very thin and of red wood. He placed it in the wallet with the cigarette.

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"Lieutenant," he said, looking up, "I don't believe that Major North smoked. Did he?"

"No — he never used tobacco in any form."

"But you keep matches here?"

"Of course," came the surprised reply; "there are some on the desk now."

The detective arose and looked at the matches in the little porcelain safe. They were thick and of white wood.

Turning, Barnes picked up the newspaper that had been taken from North's cold fingers and glanced at it mechanically. Something about it caught his eye, and instantly his manner changed. He turned to Lieutenant Hale briskly:

"I'd like to know if the keys are still in his possession. Would you mind looking?"

Tenderly the officer began a search of the clothing of his late superior. Finally the keys were located — a dozen of them on a steel ring.

"If you thought they'd been stolen, you're mistaken," he commented mournfully.

The detective grabbed the bunch eagerly and

began to go over them one at a time. As he did so, the lieutenant named the purposes for which they were used.

“That big brass one,” he said, “is the key of the storehouse where the explosives are kept. The old man was particularly careful about that.”

It was an old-fashioned key, and Bromley Barnes examined it with special minuteness: All the time he was thinking profoundly with the air of a man who is trying to put two and two together. Occasionally his glance wandered to the newspaper that lay opened on the Commandant's desk. Suddenly he gave a cry — a cry of mingled horror and exultation.

“I've got it,” he exclaimed, “I've got it, and God grant that we may not be too late!”

“What do you mean?” asked the officer.

Barnes was standing erect now, his gray eyes filled with a smoldering fire, and his right hand passing rapidly to and fro over his glistening bald head.

“Lieutenant Hale,” he cried in a suppressed

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voice, "will you be able to do the decent thing by the remains of our dear friend —"

"Certainly," interrupted the young man, "but what —"

The detective had reached the door by this time, and he only paused long enough to fling back:

"I've no time for explanations now. We've got to hurry. It may be a question of life and death!"

By this time Barnes and Clancy had taken their places in the little green-colored motor car, and the driver was being urged to hasten with all speed to the National Arsenal. He entered into the spirit of the thing, and in a few minutes the trusty machine was speeding along the roads at a rate of speed that would have shamed a railroad engine. Houses and barns shot by with bewildering rapidity, and once, when the wheels struck a rut in the road, the car jumped three feet in the air. It came down without any injury to the riders, but Clancy could not help wondering if he was going to come out of the adventure with a whole body.

All the while Barnes sat there with the silence of

a graven image. His jaw was set, and he looked ahead with the steely eyes which his young assistant had come to know so well. Clancy said nothing. He realized that it was no time for words, but he was filled with a consuming curiosity. Once Barnes pulled out his watch and looked at it intently. His lips moved, and the young man listened to hear what he was going to say. He spoke, but it was to himself and not to Clancy.

“An hour,” he muttered; “it would take about an hour — I wonder if we will be too late?”

Presently the buildings of the National Arsenal hove in sight, and when Barnes saw the brick walls and the low stone coping surrounding them he breathed what seemed like a sigh of relief. There were no signs of activity without, but the detective knew that inside at least two thousand men and women were as busy as bees. The main building was a long, low structure, and a few hundred feet away was the storehouse used for the finished explosives. The little green-colored motor car rolled up the driveway, and at that moment a man came out

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of the main building. Barnes recognized him as the Superintendent of the works.

"Grayson," he shouted hoarsely, "you have a fire drill or something of that sort for the employees, haven't you?"

"Certainly."

"Well, demonstrate it. Get the men out at once. See how quickly you can do it."

"Why?"

"Well," said the detective, trying to control himself, "my young friend here," pointing to Clancy, "would like to see the fire drill."

The business-like superintendent shrugged his shoulders.

"I'd like to oblige you, Mr. Barnes, but we're way behind with our work."

"It's important to get the men out of that plant at once," snapped the veteran.

"If Major North were here," faltered Grayson, catching the note of authority in the voice of the other man.

"Major North is dead," was the abrupt reply.

“What?” he exclaimed, “you don’t mean —”

“I do mean it,” burst forth Barnes, losing his self-control, “and for God’s sake get the men out at once.”

Grayson was awed.

“All right,” he murmured, moving away; “is there danger?”

“Yes — no; I can’t tell,” exclaimed the detective, “but let’s act first and talk afterwards.”

It did not take Grayson long to recover his self-possession, and after that he was the cool executive, accustomed to handling men, and to having his lightest wish quickly obeyed. He issued the necessary orders, and in an incredibly short time all of the employees were ready to go through the fire drill which really meant marching out of the building and into a big field many hundreds of yards down from the Arsenal. But it was an orderly march. If some one had yelled “fire” in that human bee hive, there would have been a stampede and a panic, and hundreds might easily have been killed and injured in the crush. As it was, Grayson simply announced

“fire drill,” and they made their way to the entrances, four abreast, in a calm and orderly manner, and with the precision of a trained regiment.

It was an impressive object lesson, and Barnes and the Superintendent stood at the doorway and looked at the men admiringly as they passed through. It was a cosmopolitan crowd. There were Poles, Italians, Austrians, Hungarians, Germans and a few Americans. Curiously enough — probably because they were not warlike, the Americans were the least efficient munition workers. Most of the other nationalities took to it as a duck takes to water. But now all were bright and eager over the unexpected fire drill. Most of them were in playful mood and laughed and joked with one another like schoolboys on a holiday. It was a relief to get away from work, even though it might be only for a short time.

Barnes and Grayson were the only ones who were not at ease. The detective was as fidgety as a cat. He turned to the Superintendent.

“Can’t you hurry them, Grayson — they’ll never get out of that place.”

Grayson yelled another order and the men changed to double-quick time. Presently they were all out of the building and assembled in the great open space adjoining the works. Some one produced an American flag and there was a cheer that echoed on the morning air. The superintendent turned to Barnes.

“Now, you’ve got them out, what do you propose to do with them?”

“I dunno,” was the helpless reply.

“Suppose you make a speech to them,” suggested Grayson with a tinge of sarcasm in his voice.

“Not a bad idea,” was the quick reply.

He turned and faced the men, but before he had time to say a word there was an explosion that shook the earth. The storehouse had blown up and parts of it went sailing through the air amid clouds of dirt and powder and burning missiles. The echo of it reverberated through the surrounding hills and valleys. It was a fearsome thing, and the multitude of scared and white-faced men gazed on the phenomenon with silent awe. The first explosion was

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followed in quick succession by four or five others, and then masses of projectiles and burning wood fell into the long, low building the men had just left. The great assemblage waited with bated breath. They instinctively knew what was to follow. Out of reach of personal danger, they anticipated the next move in this terrible catastrophe.

They were not disappointed.

There came a succession of explosions louder than those in the storehouse, and in the twinkling of an eye the splendid National Arsenal was a mass of ruins. Even the eye witnesses of the shocking affair were unable to give a coherent account of what had occurred; they were almost deafened by the thunderous sounds, and dazed by the flying dirt and burning wood. The air was filled with fire and sparks and in the midst of it a human body was catapulted into the river. The horror of it sent the women — and some of the men — into hysterics.

After it was all over it was found that the plant was a mass of ruins — and that only one person had

perished. That fact was not ascertained for about twenty-four hours, and after a census of the employees had been taken, but in the meantime, and while the place was still in flames, Grayson had informed the bewildered crowd that they owed their lives to Bromley Barnes. The men cheered, while some of the women and girls crowded about him and kissed his hand. The old man, very much bedraggled and embarrassed at this unexpected demonstration, was glad to get away.

But it was not to rest or evade responsibility. He was determined to solve the mystery of this strange explosion. Hordes of reporters, detectives and investigators thronged the ruins — and discovered nothing. Superintendent Grayson sought Barnes.

“How did you know there would be an explosion?” he asked abruptly.

“I didn’t.”

“But you expected something was going to happen?”

“Yes, I did — let’s call it intuition on my part.”

“Surely you had proof of some kind?”

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Barnes knitted his busy brows before replying, and then he said, with deliberation:

“I had no legal proof — no proof that would hold in a court of law.”

“Was the death of Major North connected with the explosion in any way — directly or indirectly?”

“It was — directly. Now see here, Grayson, if you want me to unearth the cause of this horror, you’ll stop asking questions and let me run it out in my own way.”

On the morning of the second day after the explosion it was definitely settled that the solitary victim of the tragedy was Hans Schmidt, who was employed in the storehouse. Also, it was proven that the catastrophe had been caused by an infernal machine which had been placed in that building on the morning of the explosion. The deadly thing worked by means of a time clock, and it was estimated that it had been placed there just one hour before the first shock was heard.

Who placed the infernal machine there, and what was his motive?

Barnes worked unremittingly to get the answer to this question. In this he had the assistance of Superintendent Grayson and Anton Stokley, the foreman of the Arsenal, who was also in charge of the storehouse. Stokley was a burly fellow who talked broken English and walked with a slight limp. He hurried to the detective on the very day of the explosion and offered his help.

"It may selfish sound," he said, with his curious transposition of words, "but I the criminal wish to find. It will so to my advantage be with your great government."

He piloted the detective through the piles of débris, and explained the workings of the establishment. When the remains of the sole victim had been identified as those of Hans Schmidt, he told all that he knew about that unfortunate. Schmidt, he said, was a native of Bavaria. He had come to the works a month before and had been accepted on sight for they were short-handed and the superintendent had neither the time or the inclination to ask for references.

“But he was one solitary man,” continued Stokley, “and made no friends.”

“Did he talk to you much?” questioned Bromley Barnes.

The foreman gave a twisted smile.

“No, he avoided me, just so as if I had the plague — which was all foolishness.”

Having delivered himself of this bit of philosophy, the foreman limped away, shaking his big head, and gesticulating with the air of a man who knows the times are out of joint and sees the hopelessness of trying to set them straight.

Barnes made many inquiries concerning Schmidt, the victim of the explosion, and found that he was regarded as one of the queer characters about the works. He had created much innocent merriment on the day of his arrival by reason of his dress. He wore what is commonly called a Joseph's coat — a coat of many colors, and a big cap with a glazed peak that came down over his eyes. The description made a deep impression on the detective's mind, and often afterwards during the course of his inves-

tigation he could mentally see that quaint figure with its many-colored coat and peaked cap.

In the meanwhile Anton Stokley worked painstakingly with Barnes, helping him to clear up many minor points in the investigation. He frequently mentioned the name of Hans Schmidt and always with a sigh of regret and compassion. Finally the detective reached the stage when he was ready to assemble the hundred and one pieces that went to make up this baffling jig-saw puzzle.

While Barnes was at work, Cornelius Clancy had not been idle. At the outset, the detective had given him a list of locksmiths in and about Washington, with instructions to get specific information. He had finished this task and was now in communication with the postal authorities in an endeavor to get certain facts concerning the quantity and character of the mail delivered to the munition workers at the National Arsenal. This was not an easy job, but the Postmaster-General had directed every employee in the service to coöperate with the young man, and he had really obtained something definite

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as the result of his labors. Finally, under the protection of the Secret Service operatives, he had forcibly broken into the rooms of at least three of the munition workers and shamelessly, but patriotically, gone through their private effects.

One of the lodgings thus entered was that of the late Hans Schmidt — the man with the coat of many colors.

On the fifth day after the explosion Bromley Barnes sat in his lodgings overlooking the dome of the Capitol and tried to fit together the bits of evidence he had gathered at the cost of so much labor and ingenuity. He mentally reviewed all of the happenings since that first day and endeavored to give each its relative importance. Musingly he opened his wallet and looked at the burnt match stick and the Turkish cigarette he had picked up in the office of Major North. The sight of the two articles gave him an inspiration. He had already determined to cross-examine all of those connected in any way with the business.

He would examine them in the office of the dead commandant!

All of the morning was spent in perfecting the plan he had in his mind. Clancy was given special instructions and he was told to follow them literally.

That afternoon the detective sat behind the desk of the Commandant. It was an unofficial inquiry, but in order to make it as impressive as possible, the veteran investigator had the Coroner seated on one side of him, and a representative of the War Department on the other. The first witness was Doctor Hendricks, an army surgeon. His testimony was brief but startling.

"Major North died of heart disease," he said, "but it was caused by a shock. I have discovered marks behind the left ear which satisfies me that an attempt was made to choke him, and that as a consequence of this he received the shock which caused his death."

No amount of cross-examination would shake his convictions on this point. Lieutenant Hale and

Superintendent Grayson gave much detailed information concerning the habits of the deceased, but instead of throwing any light on the investigation, they only helped to befog it. How were they to account for the fact that the Major was found in such a natural position with his newspaper in his hands? How could they explain why nothing was stolen? They made no attempt to answer these questions. Indeed, the lieutenant said that the Major was as regular as clock work, and that every morning at that hour he had always found him perusing the daily newspaper.

It was when Anton Stokley, the foreman of the store room at the Arsenal, took the stand, that something of a definite nature was elicited. He nodded in a friendly way to Barnes as he took the big arm chair, and looked at the other two men in a kindly manner. At the outset he caused a sensation by declaring positively that Hans Schmidt was responsible for the destruction of the Arsenal. He said that he had overheard a conversation between Schmidt and some unknown man on the night before the tragedy

which convinced him that they were conspirators.

"Why didn't you tell us this before, Anton?" asked Barnes, reprovngly.

He shrugged his broad shoulders.

"I was not certain, and I no want to be unjust to a dead man."

"But you are satisfied now that he was the guilty man?"

Stokley's florid face was all animation. His blue eyes were alive.

"Pos-i-tively," he said slowly and with emphasis to make his English understandable.

A smile went around the room, and then Barnes remarked dryly:

"But it's too late for us to punish Schmidt, isn't it?"

The foreman shrugged his broad shoulders again.

"He is already punished. Shot in the air and tossed in the river."

After some further questions, Bromley Barnes graciously announced that, as it was not a formal inquiry, all who desired might relieve the tedium by

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smoking. Like magic, cigars and cigarettes appeared on all sides, and in a little while nearly every one in the room was puffing at a weed. The foreman of the powder plant complacently smoked a cigarette.

“By the way, Anton,” said the detective, leaning over and speaking casually, “won’t you let me have a match?”

Flattered at the familiar form of address, the man put his hand in his pocket and, pulling out a box of matches, passed it to the inquisitor. Barnes took one of the little wooden splints, scratched the end on the sand-papered side of the holder and lit his cigar. As he did so, the flame went out, leaving the burnt match stick in his fingers. He laid it carefully on the flat desk in front of him and then drawing his wallet, took from it another match stick. With equal care, he laid it beside the other. The two, side by side, were perfect twins. Both were small and thin, and of red wood of a very soft texture. Every one in the room watched the queer performance with fascinated interest. The eyes of the

foreigner seemed to bulge from their setting. He was aroused by the voice of Bromley Barnes, stern and compelling:

“Anton Stokley, stand up!”

Automatically the man arose, with trembling limbs and frightened face

“Stokley,” continued the detective, in even tones, “I accuse you of the murder of Major North and of the destruction of the National Arsenal!”

The face of the foreman turned as white as snow. He moistened his lips with the end of his tongue.

“By what evidence?” he murmured.

“By the evidence of that burnt match stick. It was found at the feet of the dead man, and it came from the box you have just handed me.”

Stokley laughed hysterically.

“Men by the thousands have such matches — you talk nonsense.”

Barnes pressed a button, and a tall youth entered the room.

“Bennett,” said the detective, pointing to Stokley, “is this the man who ordered the key?”

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"Yes, sir," was the prompt reply, "that's the man — he brought a wax impression and we made the key while he waited."

"It's a lie!" shrieked the accused. "It's a lie. I have one perfect alibi. I can give one fine account of all my movements. It was Hans Schmidt who committed the crime — Hans Schmidt who was blown into the river."

He was shaking like a reed in the wind. But Barnes showed no mercy.

"Perhaps Hans Schmidt will have something to say about that," said the detective, and then turning to an attendant, "Tell Hans Schmidt to come in here."

Stokley twisted his agonized face in the direction of the door. The cold sweat stood out on his forehead, and he gripped the edge of the desk to steady himself. Slowly the door opened, and slowly there entered a medium-sized man, wearing a Joseph's coat — a coat of many colors. On his head was a big cap with a glazed peak shading his eyes. The accused foreman gave the figure one look and then

collapsed into his chair, his face downward on the desk.

“Enough!” he sobbed and shrieked. “I can’t fight ghosts! I did it! I thought I was serving my country, but I did it!”

It was after the waiting officers had led the assassin from the room that Barnes turned to the man with the Joseph’s coat and the peaked cap.

“You did that fine, Clancy. I had the goods on the murderer, but it only needed that finishing touch to wring the confession from the scoundrel.”

Just before the formal inquest was held, when the whole business was cleared up to the satisfaction of the authorities, Clancy ventured to put a question to his superior.

“Chief,” he said, “the burnt match stick was fine, and it was an inspiration that caused you to send me to Schmidt’s room for his old coat and cap, but I don’t understand yet how you first satisfied yourself that the Commandant was murdered and that the Arsenal was to be destroyed.”

Barnes smiled.

“That was the simplest part of the whole business. Stokley overplayed his part. He was too careful. The newspaper he stuck between the cold fingers of the Major was not that morning’s issue, and I knew North too well to imagine that he would be found reading a newspaper thirty days old. And then when I discovered a tiny particle of wax in the hole of the key in his pocket I knew that the murderer had taken an impression for the purpose of having a new one made — one that would give him access into the storehouse so he could place his infernal machine before any of the men reported for duty. He imagined that when the keys were found undisturbed no suspicions would be aroused. But the old newspaper and the particle of wax gave his game away.”

VI

ADVENTURE OF THE FRENCH CAPTAIN

BROMLEY BARNES suddenly resolved to close his bachelor apartments in Washington and spend the winter in New York. He had been working much too hard for an elderly gentleman who considered himself a retired investigator for the United States Government, and he felt that the change from the routine of the National Capital would do him a world of good. He meant it as a sort of vacation — a period of rest and relaxation.

The apartments he secured in New York were all that a man with Bohemian instincts could desire, and once he had surrounded himself with his beloved books and the little articles he treasured, he breathed a sigh of happiness. The change, he felt, would brighten his wits, and he would finally return to

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Washington refreshed by the change of scene and surroundings. He promised himself at the outset that he would not do a stroke of work, and he might have kept the promise if he had not made the mistake of inviting Forward and Clancy to spend a week with him. Forward was a clever lawyer and chemist who had helped him in some of his intricate cases, and Clancy was, as we know, his assistant and general factotum, a red-headed, happy-go-lucky, loyal, big-hearted Irishman.

The three men were seated in the cozy apartment just about dusk one evening when Barnes made the chance remark which was to start him into action.

"Bagdad, in the days of its greatest glory," he said, gazing reflectively from the big bay window of the apartment, "never possessed half the possibilities for mystery, romance and adventure that are to be found in the big cities of the United States."

Forward looked at the detective with skepticism in his brown eyes.

"They're human bees all right," he admitted,

“but I can’t see much in it beyond a frenzied struggle for wealth and pleasure.”

Barnes gazed out at the green of the park, with its big, white, marble arch before replying.

“You’re like most men in the legal profession, Forward,” he said finally; “much dabbling in the intricacies of the law has made you a skeptic.”

A low, self-satisfied chuckle came from the corner of the room. Cornelius Clancy, faithful factotum of the master of the establishment, winked mischievously at the limb of the law.

“We have no Grand Viziers,” continued Barnes, ignoring the muffled interruption, “and we may be a little short on Caliphs, one-eyed Calenders and Royal Mendicants, but we have men and women whose actual experiences cause the make-believe stories of the Turks and Persians to seem pale and prosaic in comparison. Here’s the recipe: Pour a million human beings in the seething cauldron which you may call New York, Chicago, Boston, or any of our large cities, stir them up with hate and love, make their interests and ambitions clash, and if the

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result doesn't spell romance and adventure, then my hair has grown gray in vain!"

"Perhaps there's something in what you say," conceded the lawyer.

"Something in what I say!" Barnes retorted explosively. "There's everything in what I say! Bully stories bump up against you every day in the week and you don't know it. The man that sits beside you in the subway train may be an embezzler; the smiling woman you pass on the street probably has a heart affair, which, if properly told, would melt a hardened first-nighter into tears. Why, the chances are that I couldn't throw a stone out of this window without hitting a person whose life would furnish a plot better than anything you read in fiction."

Forward smiled feebly. He spoke softly:

"I'll grant you the possibility of an adventure, but you speak of them as if they hung on every bush."

Barnes rubbed his hand across his bald head with unnecessary vigor.

"Forward," he cried, "you're the most persistent doubter I ever met. But you can't phase your Uncle Bromley. I'll go out for a dozen nights and bring you back an adventure every time."

"I thought you retired from the detective business, Chief," ventured Clancy.

"So I have," was the prompt rejoinder. "You couldn't drag me back into that sort of thing with a double team of horses."

The others exchanged smiling glances.

"And you wouldn't even go out to solve some of those knotty customs cases?" insinuated Forward.

"Not if I knew it," replied the old man. "But I'm willing to convince you youngsters that all the poetry and romance have not been squeezed out of life — that is, if you'll help."

"We'll accept your challenge," shouted Forward, "and we'll call ourselves 'The Adventure Syndicate — Limited'!"

"Sounds good," smiled the old man, entering into the spirit of the sport, "but why the 'Limited'?"

"Oh, that's just a business word put in for your sake."

"For my sake?"

"Yes," laughed the lawyer, "it means that your responsibility in this scheme is limited. If you don't make good, we're going to be magnanimous. We'll think as much of you as if you hadn't entered on this Don Quixote enterprise."

"All right, boys," agreed Barnes.

"Now, what about the first adventure?" asked Forward.

The old man smiled blandly. "I don't know," he said, "but the other day you told me you had been living in New York over twenty years and had never been on the Bowery. You said that, for all you knew to the contrary, there wasn't any Bowery, except maybe a myth invented for the benefit of song writers and vaudeville artists. You're the first New Yorker that ever admitted ignorance of anything. You deserve consideration. I'll go to the Bowery with you right now."

"But," objected the lawyer, looking at the immac-

ulate evening dress of the Chief, "I thought you were going to the Opera to-night?"

"So I was, but I'm willing to swap it for something of human interest. The Bowery for me."

Clancy sighed.

"I'm afraid you're both going to be dreadfully disappointed. The Bowery's perfectly respectable. It's like any other business street in New York."

In spite of this warning, they made the trip to the once-famous thoroughfare. As Clancy predicted, they were completely disillusioned. They passed one of the modern moving picture shows. Barnes shook his head sadly.

"Nothing the same; since Tony Pastor died the whole town seems different."

Just as he spoke, a ball of crumpled paper fell directly in front of the old man. The others kept moving, but Barnes halted them.

The next moment he was pulling out a piece of narrow tape which had been enclosed in the paper and which made itself apparent as the ball was torn apart. The tape was about two feet in length and

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it contained a message written in a rather shaky handwriting. The Chief moved under a convenient electric light. Forward and Clancy each held an end of the tape while the old man read as follows:

“I have been kidnaped and locked up in the garret of this house like a rat in a trap. If the person who finds this note will notify the police he will earn the prayers and the everlasting gratitude of Henri La Rue, captain of the French merchant steamer known as the *Mermaid*.”

Barnes turned and looked at the front of the house. It was an ordinary four-story dwelling with an attic. A store on the ground floor was used as a delicatessen shop. A private entrance on the side showed a sign that proclaimed “Apartments to Rent.” Clancy spoke to the old man.

“What do you think of it, Chief?”

“I think it’s a bit fishy,” interjected Forward, who seemed out of sorts.

“Well, it does smell of the sea,” admitted Barnes, laughingly.

“You’re not going to bother with it, are you?” asked the lawyer in surpris

"I'm going to investigate it, if that's what you mean," answered the old man, good-naturedly.

Without any further ado, Barnes hurried to the private entrance of the house and, finding the door unlocked, walked in. He ran up the narrow stairway, followed by Forward and Clancy. They soon found themselves on the top landing. A door confronted them on either side. The Chief tapped on the one facing the street.

"Hello," he shouted, "is Captain La Rue there?"

"Yes," cried an eager voice, "who is it?"

"A friend who wishes to help you," was the reply.

"Thank Heaven for that!" was the fervent response. "Have you a key?"

"Clancy," directed the Chief, "find the janitor and bring him here at once. Tell him if he don't hurry, we'll smash the door."

Before many minutes the janitor appeared. At first he was insolent and threatening, but when Barnes made known his identity his manner changed.

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"The room was just rented this afternoon," he said apologetically, "and honest, gents, I ain't got no right to let yer in."

"You're detaining a man there against his will!" snapped the detective.

"I ain't doin' nothin' of the kind," was the sulky rejoinder. "He was put there by his brother."

"His brother?"

"Yes, Mr. James, who rented the room. He said his brother'd been drinkin' heavy and that he didn't want him to get out till he got back."

"That's false!" roared a muffled voice. "I was drugged and thrown in this hole!"

"Open that door at once!" demanded Barnes sternly, "or you'll make your explanation to the Captain of Police."

Without any further delay the janitor put the key in the lock and threw open the door. The three men crowded into the room. The reflector from a smoky lamp in the hall shed a dim light into the apartment. It was almost bare excepting a bed, a cheap washstand, and a couple of broken chairs.



**"STARING AT THEM LIKE A MAN WHO HAD LOST HIS
WITS"**

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On the edge of the bed sat a bewildered sailor staring at them like a man who had lost his wits. A closely cropped beard covered the chin and jowls of his sunburned face. The sudden entrance seemed to have deprived him of the power of speech. Barnes, in his jerky way, told of finding the message.

"Now," he concluded, "tell me your story."

Instead of complying, the frightened-looking creature called out in frenzied tones:

"The time! The time! For God's sake, tell me the time!"

Forward was about to make some angry retort when the Chief checked him. He glanced at his watch.

"It is half-past seven."

The man on the bed gave a wail of despair, buried his face in his hands and cried like a baby.

Barnes, who had the faculty of adapting himself to all sorts of circumstances, permitted the Frenchman to exhaust his grief. Then he said gently:

"Now, if you'll tell me your story I may be able to help you."

The man shook his head with a gesture of despair.

"You're very kind, but I'm past helping now."

"You don't look like a drinking man," was the suggestive remark.

"I'm not — that's the meanest part of it."

"Why the meanest part of it?"

La Rue looked at his questioner dumbly for a moment. Presently, he got off the bed and took a turn up and down the room. Then he turned to Barnes.

"I might as well tell you the story. It may relieve me to do so."

"There isn't any doubt about that. Go ahead now and don't omit any part of it."

The sailor smiled grimly.

"I'm not likely to forget any part of it. My name is Henri La Rue, captain of the *Mermaid* and a native of Bordeaux, though my mother was English. I've been on the sea all my life and have had charge of this ship for the last six years. Ten

days ago I sailed from my home port with a cargo of French champagne consigned to Bunn and Company, of New York.

"You got in with it safely?" interrupted Forward.

"Oh, yes, I got in with it all right," he said bitterly.

"Then why —

"Forward," commanded the Chief, "please keep quiet and let the captain tell his story in his own way."

"Thank you," acknowledged the seaman, the flicker of a smile on his disturbed countenance, "that's what I want to do. Well, to make the story clear, I should say that your new tariff law increases the duty on champagne from \$6 to \$9.60 per case. Now, under the commercial treaty lately existing between the United States and France, this new tariff could not go into effect until after certain preliminaries had been complied with. One was a proclamation by your President. After that, it was agreed between the two countries that the treaty

should be abrogated on a certain date — which date was to-day. Now to win the benefit of the old — the lower — duty on my cargo of wine, it was necessary for me to get the *Mermaid* in port and to file my manifest at the Custom House before the closing hour to-day.”

“And the closing hour?” interjected the lawyer.

“The closing hour,” replied the captain, “was at half-past four this afternoon.”

“What time did you arrive in port?” asked Barnes.

“At half-past three.”

“Then it was all right,” cried Clancy.

“So I thought,” resumed the Frenchman, sadly, “but it proved to be all wrong.”

“How?”

“Well, the minute we touched the wharf I jumped ashore with my manifests and other ship’s papers and started for the Custom House. A big, broad-shouldered fellow standing on the pier came forward and shook hands with me, congratulating me

on my success in getting in on time. That pleased me, naturally — you would have been pleased yourself under the circumstances.”

“The fellow said, ‘Captain, you’re a game sport and if there’s anything I admire it’s a game sport. If you’ll jump into my automobile I’ll run you up to the Custom House in no time.’”

“I was so crazy to file my papers so as to make the transaction complete and legal that I accepted the invitation. On the way up he pulled out a flask of brandy and invited me to have a swig. Now, I’m not a drinking man. In fact, I’m so abstemious that you might almost call me a total abstainer, but I was nervous and excited from the strain of the voyage, and I thought a few drops would merely act as a stimulant. I took it and when I recovered consciousness an hour ago I found myself a prisoner in this room.”

“A plot!” ejaculated Clancy.

“Beyond a doubt,” wailed the captain, “and the worst part of it is that all of my papers are gone. But what difference does that make? I’ve lost the

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race, and Bunn and Company will lose a little fortune!"

While he was talking, Barnes stooped down and picked up a newspaper that lay on the floor.

"What's this?" asked the Chief.

"Oh," answered the other wearily, "that's to-day's issue of the *New York Journal of Commerce*. I always get it when I'm in port to read the shipping news. But it has no interest for me now. There's nothing in life for me now. I'm a broken man!"

"Did you have your manifest in your pocket?" queried Barnes, ignoring the note of dejection.

"No, I had it with the other ship's papers in a little red leather portfolio. It looked like a music roll."

"Even if you were in time," said the Chief, "you could not do anything without your papers."

"No; I'm helpless without them."

"What did your obliging automobile friend look like?"

"Broad shoulders, big, round, red face and hands like hams."

"A professional bruiser engaged for the purpose," commented the old man.

He walked over to the window and gazed out at the street lights. After what seemed to be an interminable time, he turned suddenly to the captain.

"You had a race across the ocean?"

"Yes, sir, with the *Swan* under Captain Jules LeFevre. We left Bordeaux at the same time, but I passed him on the fifth day and he won't be in for at least twenty-four hours. But he'll be better off than I am. He'll have his ship's papers."

Barnes had pricked up his ears with interest.

"His cargo was champagne?"

"Oh, yes."

"And who was it consigned to?"

The seaman hesitated and scratched his head with the air of one who is groping in his memory. The Chief waited anxiously for the reply. Finally, Captain La Rue spoke slowly, as if he were not quite sure of himself:

"I think his cargo was consigned to Feldspar and Feldspar."

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Barnes threw his hands in the air with a cry of delight.

"Clancy," he shouted, "go to the nearest drug store and beg, borrow or steal a business directory! Look for dealers and agents in wines. After that, get the names and home addresses of all the Feldspars you can find."

The young man departed on his errand. The detective turned to Forward.

"Get a taxicab and bring it to the door at once. I think there will be something doing before the night's much older!"

The cab and the addresses from the directory came at the same time. There were many Feldspars. Barnes shifted them and discarded all but two — one located on Fifth Avenue, the other on West 149th Street. The machine whizzed to the Fifth Avenue address first. It was dark and deserted. No one answered the summons.

"Just as I expected," commented Barnes. "Now, we'll try the junior member of the firm."

Not a minute was wasted in making the trip up

town. Indeed, the chauffeur was twice threatened with arrest for exceeding the speed laws, but each time his air of injured innocence won his liberty. In due time they reached their destination. Barnes halted the cab at the corner of the street.

"This part of the game calls for a little discretion," he said. "It means the observation of one of my cardinal rules. You boys understand it very well. Prudence in preparation and boldness in execution."

The house, which stood alone, was brilliantly illuminated. There was a clatter and a buzz of voices in the rear of the dwelling. Here a number of musicians, clad in gorgeous raiment, were tuning up their instruments. Four or five waiters were preparing to serve a dinner.

"You and Clancy go to the back of the house. You may be useful later in the evening," whispered the old man to Forward.

"Where are you going?"

"I'm going in the front door."

"What then?"

"After that I shall be guided by circumstances. If I'm thrown out I hope I shall take it philosophically."

Barnes did not go in immediately. For ten or fifteen minutes he reconnoitered. He ascertained, at the risk of breaking his neck, that a banquet was in progress in the beautifully decorated dining-room. The Chief glanced at his own immaculate evening dress with a smile of satisfaction. He had come prepared at any rate. He gave final directions to Captain La Rue, who was posted at the front door, in case of need, and boldly walked into the hallway. A servant opened the door of the vestibule. Barnes tossed him his hat and coat with an air of confidence. The man smiled obsequiously.

"You're late, Mr. Cozzens," he said.

"How did you know my name was Cozzens?" asked the Chief, sharply.

"Why, I just heard Mr. Feldspar say that Mr. Cozzens was the only man who had not arrived."

"Bright mind," smiled the detective, and he slipped the man a dollar.

He felt that it was worth that much to be furnished with a name when he was about to enter upon such an uncertain adventure. The servant was delighted. He became extra officious. He rushed ahead of the Chief and, parting the curtains leading to the dining-room, called out in a rich, sonorous, English voice :

“ Mr. Cozzens.”

A half-dozen men in evening dress were seated about a round table. One of these, a man with a red, smooth face and a bull neck, arose to greet the newcomer.

“ Welcome to our midst, Mr. Cozzens,” he cried with mock ceremony.

Barnes smiled his acknowledgment and seated himself in the only vacant chair. He gazed curiously around at the members of the dinner party. They all bore a resemblance to the host; that is to say, they all had very thick necks and very red faces. Their cheeks were so puffy that it gave them all the singular appearance of having little, round eyes. In short, there was an air of dissipated

shrewdness in each of their faces. Barnes made a guess at their identity and he hit the bull's-eye the first time. They were all wine agents.

Feldspar revealed this fact himself before many minutes.

"How do you do, Mr. Cozzens," he said, shaking hands. "We're glad to have you with us."

"Thank you," was the reply, "I am glad to be able to be here this evening."

"Mr. Cozzens," said the host, with a patronizing wave of the hand, "is our Canadian representative. This is the first time I have had the honor of meeting him."

The bogus Mr. Cozzens bowed in acknowledgment of this unexpected dignity and was presented to his associates in an informal way. Every now and then he glanced slyly at his watch. He had much to do and time was fleeting. Besides, the real Mr. Cozzens might appear to complicate the situation. Finally, much to the relief of the Chief, Feldspar arose to "make a few remarks."

"Gentlemen, I greet you and wish you the com-

pliments of the season. When we invited our principal agents to meet the firm, we thought to furnish you with a surprise. The *Swan*, loaded with a cargo of wine for our house, left Bordeaux ten days ago. We thought it would reach here in time to take advantage of the old tariff rates. Unfortunately, it failed. However, every cloud has its silver lining. The *Mermaid*, which was carrying a cargo to a rival house, arrived here early this afternoon. The captain of the *Mermaid*, however, paused to celebrate his victory and failed to reach the Custom House. His manifest and other ship's papers were lost and some wag has sent them to me as a trophy of the occasion. So that, instead of a defeat, the game is simply a draw."

Amid the buzz of excitement and conversation the papers in the red portfolio were passed around from hand to hand. When they reached Barnes he examined them critically and then thrust them into his inside pocket. Feldspar noticed the action. He laughed.

"No tricks on travelers!" he said; "I'll have those papers back."

"They don't belong to you!" retorted the Chief.

"Nor to you!" returned the other, with some surprise.

Barnes smiled blandly. "I'll see that they reach the rightful owner."

Every eye was on the old man. Feldspar rose in his chair, white with anger.

"What's the meaning of this nonsense?" he shouted in tones husky with rage. At this critical juncture the curtains were parted and a voice announced: "Mr. Cozzens!"

A short, thick-necked man, with a red face, hopped into the room, puffing like a porpoise. He looked enough like the other diners to belong to the same family.

Amazement gripped Mr. Frank Feldspar so suddenly that he was denied the power of speech.

He pointed a stubby forefinger at the newcomer and finally spluttered:

"Are — you — you Mr. Cozzens?"

“So me mother and father says,” was the flippant rejoinder.

“And you?” cried the wine merchant, wheeling around to the Chief.

“I?” was the response. “Here’s my card,” he said, handing a pasteboard to the host.

“‘Bromley Barnes,’” he read, “‘Formerly Special Investigator of the United States Customs Service.’”

“At your service, sir,” said the Chief, with his profoundest bow.

“Give me those papers!” cried Feldspar.

“Not to-night,” said Barnes.

“You’d better,” cried the other; “it’s six to one! No one here will help you!”

“I will!” piped a shrill voice from the rear.

Every one turned to look. It was a waiter who spoke. He had a napkin carelessly thrown over his arm and was in the act of removing a plate. The detective gave one glance and uttered a cry of joy.

“Clancy! You darling boy!”

Feldspar gave a sniff of disdain. He spoke bitterly:

“A waiter! Much good he'll do you!”

Unexpectedly another voice was heard:

“Maybe I can help some.”

The sound came from behind a cluster of ferns. The next moment a red-coated person emerged, carrying a trombone. Barnes was amazed. The musician laid down his instrument and stepped into the light. The old man gave another shout of delight.

“Forward, as I'm a sinner!”

To complete the picture, Captain La Rue pushed into the room. Feldspar sized up the quartette in silence for some moments. He meditated fight. Discretion proved to be the better part of valor. He spoke in a husky voice:

“Things have come to a pretty mess,” he said, “when a crowd of ruffians can break into a gentleman's house in this fashion. Get out of here!”

“We're going to get out,” retorted the old man, “but I may have more to say to you later. Abduction and larceny are serious crimes under the New York law.”

"Don't hold me responsible," answered the wine man, his voice trembling in spite of himself. "I had nothing to do with it."

The four men hurried out of the house and jumped into the waiting taxicab. Barnes looked at his watch. He spoke sharply to the driver:

"To the Battery as fast as you can get there."

The machine started off at a rate of speed that menaced life and property. It swung into Broadway and went humming down that thoroughfare. Fortunately the street was deserted and there was nothing to obstruct their progress. Very little was said.

Forward and Clancy were all at sea but forbore to question the Chief. They felt that there must be method in his madness and that this was not the time to bait him with unnecessary interrogations. Presently the old man awoke from his reverie. He glanced shyly at Clancy.

"Con," he said, "you certainly made a model waiter."

The Irishman laughed.

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“ I’m glad to hear it. But my work was nothing to the way Forward blew that fake trombone. He got purple in the face. I thought once he was going to blow his head off.”

Everybody laughed. Suddenly the Chief thrust the red portfolio into the hands of Captain La Rue.

“ Here are your papers, Captain. Don’t lose ’em again.”

They had not gone many blocks when Forward gave an exclamation of dismay. He had his watch out and was looking at it.

“ I’m not a mind reader,” he said, “ but if you count on getting to the Custom House before midnight I’m afraid you’ll be badly mistaken.”

There was silence for some moments. Barnes was clearly disconcerted. He poked his head out of the window of the taxicab and when he drew it in again there was a look of relief upon his countenance.

“ You’re a pretty good guesser, Forward,” he remarked, “ but the game is not up yet — not by a long shot.”

The lawyer-chemist looked at his friend gloomily.

“Evidently you propose to hand in these papers at the Custom House before midnight. It will take ten minutes to get there, if it takes a minute, and we have just five minutes to do it in — it can’t be done!”

“I’ve got it,” shouted Barnes, and then lowering his voice, he added: “At least I think I’ve got it.”

“What is it?” asked Forward.

“Why one of the deputy collectors of customs is a friend of mine, and lives in the Ainsworth Apartments, which are only two blocks from here.”

“What good will that do — the Ainsworth Apartments are not the Custom House.”

“Yes, but a deputy collector of customs is a deputy collector, no matter what part of the city he may be in.”

“It’s worth trying,” conceded Forward.

“Worth it?” ejaculated Barnes; “why there isn’t anything else to do!”

The orders were given to the driver and they got to the Ainsworth Apartments in a few minutes, and

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by rare good luck found that Mr. Katby was in. He received them with delightful courtesy and when Barnes asked if they could file their papers with him, he said :

“ Why, yes, it’s rather unconventional, but it’s perfectly legal.”

“ Now, what did I tell you,” exclaimed the detective, turning to Forward with a look of triumph.

“ All right,” smiled the other feebly, “ but we’d better hurry. That clock on the mantel says five minutes of twelve.”

While Captain La Rue was laying his papers on the table in orderly fashion, Barnes was giving the deputy collector a hasty sketch of the events that had brought them to his apartments instead of to the Custom House.

“ You deserve to win out,” said Mr. Katby, as he scrutinized the papers.

While this was going on, La Rue looked about the room curiously. It was a bachelor’s apartment and furnished in artistic style. The sailor noticed that the ceiling decorations depicted three cherubs cir-

cling in midair. The voice of Mr. Katby interrupted his meditations:

"I find these papers in proper form and I'm now ready to swear you, Captain."

Captain La Rue raised his right hand and solemnly swore that the contents of the papers were correct to the best of his knowledge. As he finished, the onyx clock on the marble mantelpiece struck the hour of midnight. The deputy collector put out his hand to him.

"I congratulate you. Uncle Sam knows when he's beaten."

"Thank you," murmured the captain, but at that moment he experienced a queer sensation. His head was hurting him. He looked up and the three cherubs on the ceiling were circling about madly. The next moment everything went black and La Rue fell to the floor unconscious.

It did not take long to revive the exhausted captain. A glass of wine and some light food did the business, and in the course of a half hour he was leaving the apartment of the deputy collector with

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the detective who had enabled him to win the race against time.

After they were seated in the taxicab again and on their way to the Washington Square apartments, La Rue turned to Barnes expectantly:

“How did you know there was a loophole for me?”

“By the newspaper I picked up on the floor of the house in the Bowery. It was a night extra and it contained the special dispatch from Washington, ordering all Custom Houses to remain open until midnight in order to comply with the provisions of the French-American commercial treaty.”

“But — but Feldspar’s captain might have done the same thing.”

“Possibly — but I doubt it. At all events, the news was not flashed to this city until after business hours and your rival and his friends were so busy celebrating your discomfiture that they failed to be on the business job.”

While La Rue, between tears and laughter, was protesting his eternal gratitude, Clancy exclaimed

with flashing eyes, "I think that was a rotten plot on the part of Feldspar. Just because he lost, was no reason why —"

Barnes halted him in his whimsical way:

"Boys," he said, "it was simply the manifestation of a trait in human nature as old as Adam — a trait that has been admirably depicted by one Æsop in his justly celebrated fable called 'The Dog in the Manger!'"

VII

THE ADVENTURE OF THE OLD CHESS PLAYER

BARNES and his two friends sat in the living-room of the former's Washington Square apartment. A timid knock on the door interrupted their conversation and, in response to the Chief's "Come in," a girl, dressed in black, entered.

She was petite and her very white face was rendered snow-like by the contrast with her black clothes. Clancy, with his ardent Celtic nature, thought she was the most appealing creature he had ever gazed upon. Forward mentally compared her to a dainty Dresden doll. She looked at the three men and then instinctively turned to the oldest:

"This is Mr. Bromley Barnes?"

"Yes."

"I am Emma Brown."

"Glad to meet you, Miss Brown."

The little lady halted irresolutely. But suddenly she cast all restraint aside and cried impulsively:

"I want you to save Jack!"

"Jack?" queried Barnes.

"Yes, Jack Winslow, the man I'm engaged to marry."

"Ah," he said, "the Winslow tragedy. You are interested in that?"

"Very much so," she replied bitterly.

"How?"

"Didn't you know that Jack has been accused of the murder?" she asked in surprise.

"To be perfectly candid, I didn't," said the Chief. "I never read these matters unless I am specially interested."

"Well," she retorted, with an assertiveness that sat strangely on her young shoulders, "I want you to be specially interested in this case."

"Why did you come to me?" asked Barnes.

"Because my father knew you. He worked in the Custom House when you were the Chief Investi-

gator there. He said you could solve anything. I want you to solve this mystery."

"Suppose you give me the facts."

The girl took a few moments to compose herself before beginning the recital of the crime that had aroused the city.

"I met Mr. Winslow some time ago," she said finally, "and last Sunday week Jack took me to his father and presented me as his future wife."

"What did the old gentleman say to that?" asked Barnes.

"He was very angry. He said that Jack was too young to think of marriage. He said he should establish himself in business before taking a wife."

"Was there a quarrel?"

"You can hardly call it that. But old Mr. Winslow was an eccentric person. He was very positive, and the manner in which he talked disturbed Jack and made me very unhappy."

"When was he killed?"

"The night before last. You know he conducted a circulating library in the house in which he had

lived all his life. Since the death of his wife a few years ago he has lived practically alone."

"Except his son?"

"Yes, of course. Jack slept in the house, but that was all."

"And the old man had no intimates?"

"He had one friend, a man named Goodrich, who lived directly opposite, on the same street. Mr. Winslow was a chess enthusiast. Mr. Goodrich is the same. That was the tie that bound them. At night, after the old gentleman had closed the library, Mr. Goodrich would join him and they would play chess until eleven o'clock. Promptly at that hour they would quit. Frequently the game was left unfinished and they would resume it after supper on the following night."

"What happened on the last night Mr. Winslow was seen alive?"

"They met and played as usual. Jack came in just as they quit their game and he went to the front door with Mr. Goodrich and bade him good night."

"Did Jack go to bed then?"

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She hesitated a moment before replying.

"Not — not right away."

"What happened? Please tell me everything if you expect my help."

"You will help me, then?" she asked eagerly.

"I haven't said so yet. What happened?"

"They got into a discussion about — about me."

"What was the result?"

"Mr. Winslow said he would disown his son, and Jack said he intended to leave home the next morning."

"What time did he go to bed?"

"About midnight. He went to his room in the third story and left his father sitting down stairs studying the unfinished chess game."

"Well, go on."

"That was all — that night. At seven o'clock in the morning, Mrs. O'Brien, who cooked the meals and looked after the house, came and let herself in with her latch key. Oh, I can't —"

"Go on!"

"She stumbled over something on the floor. It

was Horatio Winslow with a bullet through his forehead, and she ran screaming from the house and called the police. They made a search. No one was down stairs. They went up to the third story and found Jack sound asleep in bed. They awoke and took him down and confronted him with the body. He was horror stricken and nearly fainted, and they claimed that was proof of his guilt, and now Jack is in prison charged with the death of his father!"

Barnes looked very grave.

"Did they find the pistol?"

"No, they could not find a weapon anywhere, and I said that it was a suicide, but they claim it would have been impossible for the old man to kill himself and then hide the weapon."

"A reasonable assertion," commented the Chief.

"Oh," she cried hysterically, "you're not going to turn against Jack, too, are you?"

"I'm not turning against anybody," said Barnes quietly.

"But he's perfectly innocent!" she insisted.

"How do you know?"

"He told me so!"

The detective laughed in spite of himself, and she began to cry softly.

"Come, come," he said gently. "Can't you give me some proof of his innocence?"

She cried eagerly: "Why, he *couldn't* be cruel enough to kill his own father!"

"Have you any of the newspaper stories?"

Opening a little black bag, she produced an envelope containing clippings of everything that had been printed of the crime.

Barnes read them all carefully and then looked intently at his visitor.

"Miss Brown," he said finally, "the facts seem to be all against the young man, but I admire your courage and somehow I have faith in your intuition. I'll take the case."

She jumped from the chair with a cry of triumph.

"I felt sure you would not desert me. I'll go and tell Jack at once. I'll let him know that he owes his liberty to you."

"If he gets his liberty," corrected the old man dryly. "We've got a hard fight ahead of us, but I'll do the best I can."

Barnes acted with characteristic energy and promptness. His first call was at police headquarters. Captain Campbell, who was in charge, received him quite cordially, but frowned when he learned his purpose.

"That girl's been whimpering to you," he said, with nasty savageness.

"That has nothing to do with the case," retorted Barnes. "I came here for information."

"Well," was the insolent response, "we'll probably give you information that you don't want."

Barnes smiled cheerfully.

"It may be hard to get what I want here — since I'm after the truth."

The captain's eyes bulged and his face swelled until it looked as if he were about to have an attack of apoplexy. The other checked the incipient outburst of profanity by raising his right hand in that impressive manner of his.

"I'm not going to trifle, Campbell; if you don't answer me civilly, I'll go to your superior."

"What do you want to know?" he cried doggedly.

"I'd like to know what became of the pistol?"

"We couldn't find the pistol."

"Don't you think that strange?"

"Not at all; the kid's hid it somewhere. It will come to light in due time."

Barnes ignored the sneering tone.

"It has been said that no one was in the house except Jack Winslow. Wouldn't it have been possible for some thief to have gotten in by the front door?"

The captain shook his head.

"No; everything was found locked tight. No signs of a jimmy. The front door had one of those patent appliances which made it shut automatically. The thief theory don't go either, because nothing was stolen. There's no use trying to apply any of your fantastic theories to this case, Mr. Bromley Barnes! The thing's as plain as the nose on my

face. The kid got into a fight with the old man and killed him. That's all there is to it!"

After that unsatisfactory interview, Barnes hurried to the Winslow house. He found Mrs. O'Brien and Adam Goodrich, Winslow's faithful old friend, in charge. The good-hearted Irish woman had been weeping and the old chess player looked forlorn.

"Glad to meet you, Mr. Barnes," he said with a break in his voice, "but nothing you can do can bring my dear old chum back to me again." He pointed to a table nearby. "Look there; there's the unfinished game of chess just as we left it that night. It will never be finished now. No one could play chess like 'Rash Winslow. He was a man worth playing with."

Barnes made a sweeping survey of the room.

"Was everything left undisturbed?"

"As far as we know," replied Goodrich, "unless the police mussed things up."

The detective tried the door. It was a big, old-fashioned affair, controlled by a patent device that

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made it close of its own accord. He next made a careful examination of the big hallway leading to the door. There was a narrow mantelpiece against the wall. The plush drapery attached to this had been partly torn off. A small, nickel-plated alarm clock was on the floor, one side dented. The Chief examined these things carefully.

He was on his hands and knees, carefully examining the threadbare carpet.

"Did Winslow smoke?" he asked.

"Yes," replied Goodrich, "it was one of his consolations. Every night, before retiring, he smoked a pipeful."

"I thought so," murmured Barnes, as he gathered up a handful of the fine stuff from the floor.

"Now," he said, "if you will, I wish you would hold the door open while I examine the outside steps."

He wandered around for some moments, but presently found what he had been looking for. He arose with a grunt of satisfaction. They reëntered the house.

"I suppose," said Barnes, "they have probed for the bullet?"

"Yes," said Goodrich, "the coroner's physician did that. He took it away with him."

"I'll have to see it, but I don't suppose that's possible until morning. Did he have any reason for taking his life?"

"None whatever. He was a bit eccentric, but I think he was perfectly happy. He loved books and it cost him very little to live. He was in the midst of his beloved volumes all day, and had his game of chess with me at night. What more could a man wish? I don't suppose I'll ever play chess again. My nerves are all shaken. Two shocks in succession are too much for a man of my age."

"Two shocks?"

"Yes; early on the morning of this affair a thief tried to break in my house. I think he got away with some old clothes, but that was all. I discovered him."

"And you frightened him off?"

"You bet I frightened him off!" chuckled Good-

rich. "I gave him a scare that he's not likely to forget. He won't try that game on me again!"

"Did you report the robbery to the police?"

"Yes; but I haven't heard anything from them."

"What did the fellow look like?"

"He was tall. I didn't get a good look at his face — he was climbing into one of the second story windows when I discovered him. You know there is a little porch or balcony around the upper part of my house."

"How did he get away?"

"He hung on to the ledge of the porch and dropped to the street and ran. I gave him a parting salute just to scare him. After that I went to bed and slept in peace until morning."

"What do you think of the charge against Jack Winslow?"

"I don't believe it," was the emphatic reply.

"He was a decent boy and he loved his father as his father loved him. They were not demonstrative, but I know the affection was there. I don't know anything about their differences. That was a fam-

ily matter that didn't concern me. But blood is thicker than water, and the boy wouldn't harm a hair of his father's head."

"But the police believe him guilty."

"You mean they say he is guilty. That relieves them of any further responsibility."

"Probably you're right, Goodrich. At any rate, it's up to me to locate the thief. You say you scared him off, but how do you know that he didn't come back and try to get into Winslow's house?"

"That might be," said the other. "I'm sure I don't know."

Early next morning Barnes was in consultation with Captain Campbell.

"Well," said the policeman tauntingly, "I suppose you found things as I told you?"

"Precisely, Captain," was the suave reply, "but there's one little point I want you to clear up if you will."

"All right," was the modified reply, "what is it?"

"I'd like to see your book of robberies or at-

tempted robberies reported for Monday morning."

Campbell grinned.

"It's a long list."

"I suppose so, but I've plenty of spare time."

The book was produced and Barnes began his weary search. Finally he located an item which told of the attempt to break in the house of Adam Goodrich on Walnut Street.

"Did you notice this?" he asked the captain.

"Yes; what about it?"

"Well, it's just opposite the house where Horatio Winslow was killed."

"I don't see anything in that."

"Probably not. Have you made any arrests?"

"No."

"Whom have you in the cells now?"

"Oh, a couple of drunks, and a darkey caught with a suit of clothes. We arrested him on suspicion. Like to see him?" he asked with a challenging air.

"Why, yes," was the prompt reply, "I think I would."

A few minutes later Barnes was in conversation with James Madison, colored.

"James," said the detective, without any preliminaries, "why did you steal that suit of clothes from poor old Adam Goodrich?"

"Adam Goodrich," was the puzzled reply.

"Yes, you know, the house on Walnut Street, where you broke in on Monday morning."

A gleam of recognition brightened the shining face.

"Oh, yes, Ah know now. Well, boss, Ah needed the money. But —" with a grin that extended from ear to ear, "he ain't no pooh man. He's able to take care of hisself."

"Why did you kill Winslow?" asked the Chief suddenly.

The ruse failed to work. Madison only smiled.

"Ah didn't kill nobody. Ah come neah bein' killed muhself."

After that retort he was as dumb as a clam. He positively refused to answer any more questions. He said he knew enough about law to know that

if he talked too much he might incriminate himself.

But when Barnes left the station-house there was an air of confidence about him that puzzled Captain Campbell mightily. The Chief called in the coroner's physician next and obtained the bullet that had killed Winslow. From there he went to the Winslow house, where he made another and more careful examination of the hallway and the spot where the old chess player had been found dead.

Finally, that night, he obtained permission from Adam Goodrich to sleep in his room in the latter's house. Similarly, he arranged that Forward should spend the night at the Winslow home. And last of all, Clancy, in the rôle of a burglar attempting to rob the Goodrich home.

The following morning, Barnes, sitting in state in his Washington Square apartment, sent for Police Captain Campbell and Deputy Coroner Nordean. Campbell and Nordean were autocrats in their way and they had little love for Barnes, but they felt that his message meant business. They arrived at the apartment together.

"I want you both to release Jack Winslow," said the old man quietly.

Campbell laughed, but in an uneasy way.

"I must say," he said, "that you dispose of that momentous affair in a light and airy fashion."

"I do it in a direct way," replied Barnes, unruffled. "I will produce the real culprit."

"What?" gasped Campbell. "When?"

Barnes looked at his watch.

"In a few moments."

"He's coming here?"

"Yes."

"Under arrest?"

"No; voluntarily."

The officers merely grunted their skepticism.

A slight tap on the door was heard. Every one sat upright. The knob turned and in walked Adam Goodrich, with a smile on his benevolent countenance. He seemed a bit surprised at seeing so many men in the room, but he nodded pleasantly to them.

"Did you bring it with you?" asked Barnes.

"Yes," was the reply, and the aged chess player

handed a pistol to the detective. It was done with the innocence of a babe. The detective produced a bullet. It fitted in the muzzle of the weapon.

Every one gasped with horror.

Before their emotion had died away, Barnes led Goodrich to an arm-chair and seated him in it comfortably.

"My old friend," he said gently, "can you stand a shock?"

"Why — er — yes," he stammered in wonder.

The Chief paused a moment as if unable to proceed.

"What is it?" insisted the other, impatiently.

"You must not feel too badly about it," replied Barnes, "but unfortunately you are the man who killed Horatio Winslow!"

"Impossible!" gasped Goodrich.

"That's what I said first, but I've demonstrated the truth to a mathematical certainty. Clancy, Forward and I reenacted the whole tragedy last night."

While Goodrich lay panting in the chair, the Chief told his story:

"The moment I heard that Mr. Goodrich had shot at a burglar I felt that the incident was connected with the tragic death of Winslow. Every step in the investigation strengthened that belief until the final proof has come just now. After Mr. Goodrich left that night, Winslow had the wordy altercation with his son Jack.

"It was disagreeable, but not at all sensational. The boy has told me all that occurred. Presently Jack went to bed and slept soundly until morning. Winslow remained up, studying the unfinished chess game. Finally he lit his pipe for his good-night smoke. It was quite late, but he went to the front door, probably to take a look at the weather."

"I see," said the Deputy Coroner, nodding his head comprehendingly.

"The clocks were striking two," continued Barnes, "and at that identical moment James Madison, the colored thief, who had robbed the house of Adam Goodrich, was fleeing down the street. Goodrich, confused, came to the window and fired his pistol. Winslow, as I said, was standing in the

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doorway. The ball struck him in the temple. He staggered back, releasing his hold on the heavy door, which was slammed shut and dead-latched by means of the patent spring. Inside the hall, the wounded man grabbed the plush cover of the mantelpiece for support. Part of it was pulled to the floor, together with an alarm clock. Winslow died almost immediately."

"How do you know Winslow was at the front door?" asked Captain Campbell.

"Because the spilled tobacco from his pipe was not only in the hallway but on the front step."

"But the time? How do you fix that?"

"By three witnesses," was the reply.

"Who are they?"

"First, the colored thief, Madison. He says he heard the clock in a nearby steeple striking the hour. Second, Adam Goodrich. He admits that it was at that precise hour that he fired the shot."

"And the third witness?"

"The third witness," retorted Barnes, "is the inanimate nickel-plated alarm clock that I found by

the body. The hands of that clock pointed to two o'clock. Naturally it stopped the moment it was pulled from the mantelpiece."

Adam Goodrich had his head in his hands and was sobbing with the intensity of a broken-hearted man. The Chief touched him on the shoulder and said softly :

"Never mind, Mr. Goodrich. You'll go free, of course, and you have the melancholy satisfaction of having cleared Winslow's son from a false accusation."

Finally the old chess player controlled his emotion. He looked up with a tear-stained face. But the ruling passion was strong.

"Poor Winslow," he said, "that game will never be finished!" Then he added hastily, with a look of defiance :

"If it had been, I'd have won!"

VIII

THE ADVENTURE OF THE LEATHER BAG

BARNES lay back in a big arm-chair in his Washington Square apartment, reading the Sunday papers. He puffed at the beloved stogie, pausing at intervals to address a casual remark to Forward and Clancy.

He went through this modern literature rapidly, albeit with all-seeing eyes. He read the headlines of the news pages. He skipped the editorials and woman's section altogether. But he lingered over the financial page and became absorbed in the personal and small "ad" section.

Presently he reached for a pair of scissors and carefully cut a fragment from the personal column. It seemed to recall something, for he fished down among the discarded papers and, bringing up a news

section, snipped a short article out of that. He calmly folded this clipping and put it away in his pocketbook. The personal he handed to Forward.

“How does that strike you?” he asked.

The lawyer read it carefully and was silent for some moments. The lines that made him stop to think were as follows:

“One hundred dollars reward! Lost, between two and three o'clock yesterday afternoon, in a Twenty-Third cross-town car, a lady's black hand bag with monogram 'L. R.' on the outside. Contained twenty-five dollars in money, besides a number of personal articles of no value to any one except the owner. The above reward will be promptly paid and no questions asked if the bag and its contents are returned to its owner. Miss Richards, The Lafayette Apartments, West 69th Street, N. Y.”

“Well,” exclaimed Barnes, cheerily, “I'm waiting. What do you think of it?”

“It's too deep for me,” replied Forward, scratching his head in a perplexed way. “Why should the young woman pay a hundred dollars for a bag containing only twenty-five?”

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Barnes laughed. "That's the meat in the cocoa-nut. If it were not for that, it might have gone, with ten thousand other personals, into the limbo of forgetfulness."

"Still," persisted the lawyer, "I don't see that we have any interest in it."

"Forward!" exclaimed the old man, with a note of playful censure, "you pretend to be eager for adventure and you won't grab it when it is whisked beneath your nose."

"What are you going to do about it?" chimed in Clancy, ever ready to head off superfluous conversation.

"Do," echoed the Chief, "I'm going to call on the lady and present her with a leather bag."

"*The* leather bag," questioned the quick-witted Irishman.

"I said *a* leather bag!"

"Have you got one?"

"I'll get one at a department store for a dollar."

"And that —"

"That," interrupted the old man, "will be the

entering wedge into the mystery that lurks behind the queer personal."

The next morning at nine o'clock Barnes tapped on a door in the Lafayette Apartments.

"Come in," said a very musical voice.

On being shown in, he was confronted by an exceedingly attractive young woman. She gave him a welcoming smile, but behind the smile there was an air of very evident perturbation.

"Miss Richards, I believe?"

She looked at him from a pair of winsome eyes.

"Yes, sir; what can I do for you?"

"I came to see about the advertisement of the leather bag."

Her eyes sparkled.

"Oh, you've got my bag!" she exclaimed.

"I've got *a* bag," replied the Chief, feeling a bit sheepish at the rôle he was playing.

"Let me see it," she cried. "I can tell you at once whether it belongs to me."

The old man shook his head sadly.

"I can't do that, Miss Richards. I'm afraid we'll

have to reverse the method of procedure. I suggest that you describe in detail the articles that were in the leather bag."

She fell into the trap without the shadow of a suspicion.

"Why, yes, there was twenty-five dollars in bank notes."

"I know about the notes. What else?"

She puckered up her pretty mouth.

"Well, there was a lace handkerchief, fifty visiting cards with my name and address. Surely that should be enough —"

"Yes, yes, but what else?"

"Two department store coins, a box of capsules and a latch key."

"I see — how did you get the capsules?"

"With a prescription, of course."

"For yourself?"

"Sir," she said, drawing herself up to her full height, which was not very high, "what do you mean by this cross-examination? If you have my bag, deliver it; if not —"

Barnes held up his hand in that authoritative way which he knew so well how to employ. It had the desired effect. It halted the torrent of any words.

"You must know, Miss Richards," he said soothingly, "that I am asking these questions for your benefit."

"For my benefit?"

"Exactly. You wouldn't want me to give the bag to the wrong person?"

"Certainly not!"

"Of course not," said the old man craftily. "Now, you said the capsules were prescribed by Dr. Smith?"

"I didn't say anything of the kind. They were prescribed by Dr. Ramsey."

"So they were," chattered the Chief, hastily gliding over this thin ice. "Now, are you sure you didn't have anything else in the bag?"

"Why, there was one other thing. A little silver purse containing probably a dollar in small change."

"Where were you coming from when you lost the bag?"

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Her eyes snapped. Her patience was clearly exhausted.

"That does not concern you!" she cried.

Barnes reached over and picked up his hat. He bowed smilingly to Miss Richards.

"The bag that I have in my possession," he said, "does not answer the description you have given me."

She stamped her foot angrily.

"How dare you come and trifle with me in this manner?"

The Chief looked at her gravely.

"Miss Richards," he said, "I'm not trifling with you. This is very serious business. You have been more or less candid with me. The time may come when you will need a friend. When that time comes you may depend on me."

He left her standing there with a look of amazement and terror in her winsome eyes. At the foot of the stairs he met Clancy.

"My boy," he said, "I want you to watch this place. All sorts of people with all sorts of bags will

come in response to that personal. One of them will have the right bag. If you can, find out which one it is and pump him. All I want is an answer to one question. Ask him how many capsules were used out of the box in Miss Richards' leather bag. That's all."

Whereupon the old man and Forward went to the Maritime Exchange where, for the next ten minutes, Barnes was buried in a maze of tables relating to the arrival and departure of steamers. He frequently consulted with the officials of the Exchange. Presently he turned to the lawyer with a look of triumph:

"Forward, I want you to go down to the foot of Twenty-Third Street, or a little this side of it, and board the *Hawk*, a steamer that arrived from Liverpool on Saturday afternoon. Find out if the ship's doctor is named Ramsey; also whether he prescribed for a Miss Richards on the way over. If possible, get a copy of the prescription. I want to verify a statement that has been made to me."

As the clocks were striking six that evening two

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men collided in front of the Washington Square apartments. Both were absorbed in thought, and the shock brought them to their senses suddenly. A fight seemed imminent, when Clancy and Forward, looking up the same moment, recognized each other.

"I've met with big success," exclaimed Clancy exultingly, "and I could hardly get here quick enough to tell the old man!"

"Same here," sputtered the lawyer.

Barnes was delighted, a few moments later, to have his lieutenants report so promptly.

"I've little to say," announced Clancy, chuckling, "except that Miss Richards has recovered her leather bag."

"That's a good deal," vouchsafed the old man. "Who returned it?"

"A conductor of one of the cross-town cars. He came there in cap and uniform. He picked the bag up from the seat where Miss Richards had left it. I judged from his beaming face that he was the finder; so as he came away I stopped him. On my asking him about the contents of the bag he was

surly at first and was going to refuse, when I reminded him that he could be reported for not turning in the leather bag to the office of the company as the rules provide. He wilted at that and told me all I wanted to know. He said that none of the capsules in the box had been taken."

"Good for you, Clancy!" ejaculated the old man.

"There's another thing."

"What is it?"

"Miss Richards has made an engagement to meet Dr. Ramsey at the Hotel Montgomery at eight o'clock."

Barnes whistled softly.

"I wonder why Ramsey didn't go to meet Miss Richards?"

"He's afraid. He thinks he's being shadowed."

"How did you discover all this?"

"The messenger boy that brought the letter was good enough to let me deliver it."

"Did Miss Richards seem pleased?"

"No; she was very much scared. She cried, but,

after a while, wiped her eyes and told me to tell Dr. Ramsey that she would be there."

"And did you?"

Clancy grinned.

"No, I left that job to the regular messenger boy."

"Will he deliver it?"

"Sure; he's to be paid at the other end. Besides, I gave him a half-dollar."

Barnes' face glowed with delight. He turned to the lawyer.

"Well, Forward?"

"Your speculations proved correct. Dr. James J. Ramsey is the ship's doctor. He's been with the boat on its last four trips across. He prescribed for Miss Richards two days before the boat landed. It seems that she suffered from an acute attack of indigestion."

"How do you know?"

"From the apothecary of the boat. He showed me the prescription. He knows all about it for he filled it himself."

Barnes turned to the lawyer.

“ You understand something about medicine; you’ve dabbled in Latin? ”

“ What I know about medicine wouldn’t save a sick kitten. As for Latin — well, I know from ‘ Cæsar’s Commentaries ’ that all Gaul was divided into three parts.”

The old man knitted his eyebrows and said impatiently: “ What do you think of the prescription? ”

“ I should say, with all due allowances for what I don’t know — that it would be a mighty good remedy for indigestion.”

“ Then it looks regular? ”

“ Entirely so.”

Long before eight o’clock the Chief and his right and left bowers were at the Hotel Montgomery. The proprietor greeted Barnes like a long-lost brother. The old man explained his mission in a few words.

“ Why, I’ve reserved a table for Doctor Ramsey,” said the boniface.

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"Give us a place," said Barnes, "where we can see without being seen, and I'll be your everlasting debtor."

They were shown to a table in a corner of the room, sheltered from observation by two large palm trees. Four or five feet away was a white-napkined table—the only vacant spot in the crowded dining room. As eight o'clock struck they espied a woman speaking to the head waiter. He escorted her, with many bows and much shrugging of the shoulders, to the unoccupied table. Miss Richards appeared to be very ill at ease. The wistful eyes glanced anxiously about the room.

"Not very gentlemanly to keep a lady waiting," muttered Barnes.

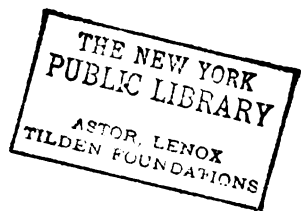
"He's probably coming in a round-about way," suggested Forward; "you know he thinks he's being shadowed."

"Clancy," said the old man, "I think we'll make you the outside sentinel for to-night."

The young Irishman accepted his cue and hurried out. From the side table where they were



“ SLOWLY THREADED HIS WAY DOWN TO THE TABLE ”



seated, Barnes and Forward could look through a big plate glass window and get a view of all the newcomers. Presently a taxicab drove up to the hotel and an alert young man jumped out. He hastened into the dining-room and slowly threaded his way down to the table where Miss Richards sat.

The young man was a bundle of nerves. He was tall and slim and wiry. His brown eyes flashed like tongues of flame. He summoned a waiter and greeted Laura Richards in such rapid succession that the two sentences appeared simultaneous.

"What shall I order for you?" asked Dr. Ramsey.

"Nothing," she said emphatically, the blood mounting to her cheeks. "I've humiliated myself sufficiently in coming here to meet you."

"Just a bite for the sake of appearances?" he suggested.

"Not if I were starving!" she exclaimed, with suppressed emotion.

"Oh, very well," he answered. "Did you bring the box with you?"

" I did."

" Did you bring the letter? " she asked in turn.

" I did."

" Let me have it."

He reached in his coat pocket and brought forth a folded letter. His manner was indifferent enough, but Barnes noticed that he retained a firm grip on the end of the note paper.

" Here's your letter," he said; " now let me have the box and we'll call it ' quits.' "

She produced her leather bag and, diving into it, drew out a small pasteboard box such as is commonly used by druggists.

" Forward," whispered the old man, " this is the time your Uncle Dudley plays the part of a highway robber."

Dr. Ramsey was handing the letter across the table and Miss Richards was passing the box in his direction. Barnes, who was making his way past their table, deliberately jolted her elbow. The unexpectedness of the blow loosened her hold on the frail thing and it fell to the floor at the feet of For-

ward. Instantly he stooped down to pick it up. But Ramsey was there before him, and, giving the lawyer a push, sent him sprawling on his hands and knees. At the same moment the young physician grabbed the box and thrust it into his trousers pocket. He snatched his coat and hat and made long strides toward the door of the café. The head waiter blocked the entrance.

“Your check? Your dinner?”

“Haven’t time to wait; give the waiter some of this!”

And while the chief functionary of the dining room was straining his eyes to discover the denomination of the bill that had been thrust into his hand, Ramsey had passed him and gained the sidewalk.

Inside, Barnes was struggling between his natural *chàgrin* and an unexplainable desire to laugh. Forward scrambled to his feet very much flushed with the half-embarrassed and half-angry feeling that takes possession of the average mortal who slips on the ice before a crowd of grinning spectators.

“Follow me,” whispered the Chief, “and bring Miss Richards with you.”

With that he hurried out with the other two trailing after him. The whole business occurred so quickly that half the diners in the room failed to see it. The others, with the indifference of their kind, dismissed it as one of the minor scandals that occur so often as to excite no comment.

Several taxicabs were lined along the curb outside the hotel, puffing and snorting as though anxious to be on their way. Ramsey recognized the one in which he had come. He jumped in, calling out an address. The chauffeur closed the door with a bang, hurried to his seat in front of the machine and whizzed away. Barnes groaned at the sight, but wasted no time in moping over his defeat. He thrust Miss Richards and Forward into a second taxicab, shouting to the driver:

“Follow that machine! Don’t let it get out of your sight!”

The chauffeur, with the restlessness of his tribe, glowed at the thought of a race. He let out full

speed and the car went bounding after its red rival. Up one street and down another they rolled until the taxicab reached Fifth Avenue. By that time, the tail end of the first car was in plain sight. Barnes noted it with a grunt of satisfaction and turned to the frightened girl by his side.

"Miss Richards," he said, in a reassuring voice, "you must realize that the time has come to tell all you know."

The girl burst into tears.

"I'm only too anxious to relieve my mind," she cried brokenly, "I'm only too sorry that I permitted myself to get mixed up in such a dreadful business!"

"You know Dr. Ramsey?" the Chief asked.

"Slightly," she replied. "He attended the same medical college as my brother. He graduated last year and secured an appointment as ship's doctor with the Anglo-American Line. I never liked the man, but was civil with him on account of my brother. I went abroad this summer to study. Returning, I happened to come over on the boat on which Dr. Ramsey is doctor. He was very friendly

with me, but when we were within two days of New York he said he had bad news for me."

"Bad news?" echoed Barnes.

"Yes; he said that Frank had written a very promising letter, and that he had it in his possession. Naturally, I pleaded with him to give it to me or destroy it. Finally he relented and said that if I would do him a slight service he would give it to me on our arrival in New York."

"What was the service?" asked the Chief.

"He said he was going to prescribe for me. Amazed, I retorted that I was not ill. He laughed and said that he knew that, but would give me a prescription for indigestion. I was to have it filled and then give him the medicine. I protested at such a queer proceeding, but finally, for my brother's sake, yielded. I thought possibly it was some college prank. I took the prescription to the ship's druggist and it was put up in twenty-four capsules in the box you tried to get to-night."

"He took the medicine from me and locked himself in his cabin. Just before landing he gave it to

me and said he would call to claim it at my apartments. I was to guard the capsules as I would my life and on no account to take any of them. As you know, I lost my leather bag containing the medicine in a Twenty-Third Street car. It was by Ramsey's direction that I offered the \$100 reward for its return. The rest you know."

"Where is the letter he gave you?" asked Barnes.

She handed the Chief the crumpled bit of paper. He smoothed it out and read it by the aid of the lamp in the cab. He gave an exclamation of disgust.

"Perfectly harmless," he said, "a boyish epistle — a perfectly silly love letter."

Miss Richards groaned.

"And to think that I've put myself in this predicament for nothing!"

"It's all right," was the soothing response; "I'll hold you harmless, but," with a click of his teeth, "I'd just like to catch that playful doctor!"

Barnes poked his head out of the window. They were at the very rear of the red car. To his surprise, it was headed for his Washington Square

apartment. Ramsey was gesticulating wildly and telling the chauffeur that he was going in the wrong direction. But the driver was not paying the slightest attention to his protests.

The two taxicabs reached the curb at the same moment. Ramsey jumped out, but instantly Barnes had the physician by the scruff of the neck. The infuriated man shook his fist at the driver of the car. A musical laugh was the only response. Something about the tone of that voice caused the old man to look up. He gave a cry of delight:

“Clancy!”

Ramsey made an effort to get away, but Barnes pressed the cold muzzle of a revolver against his cheek and he became as resistless as a babe.

“Straight up the stairway to my rooms!” commanded the detective.

The queer procession filed into the familiar apartments, and, while Forward was looking after the comfort of Miss Richards, and Clancy was devoting his attention to the prisoner, Barnes was at the telephone. He got a quick response.

"Is that you, Williams? — This is Barnes — Come to my rooms at once. — What? — Yes."

In a short time a tall, official-looking person had arrived and was greeting the old man warmly. Barnes turned to the detained physician.

"Dr. Ramsey," he said, "I want to present you to Mr. Williams, Chief of the Customs Service."

Ramsey had stood up at the first words of the detective. At the conclusion of the sentence his legs gave way beneath him like a pair of worn-out hinges.

The customs officer, who had been whispering with Barnes, turned to the prisoner briskly:

"Now, Doctor, I'll take that box of capsules!"

Ramsey gave a backward movement of the arm and was about to toss the box out of the window, when Clancy, reaching out, grasped his hand and wrenched the box from him.

He handed it to the customs officer, who promptly emptied the capsules on the table in the center of the apartment. Then he calmly and carefully proceeded to take the capsules apart. Every one in the

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room watched him with breathless interest as he extracted a beautiful pearl from each one of the coverings.

"Part of the Dillington pearl necklace!" he gasped.

"Yes," assented the Chief, "it will be, after those pearls are strung together by a good jeweler."

Williams gathered up the precious stones and summoned a plain-clothes man, whom he had stationed outside the door.

The doctor was marched off in his custody.

"It seems a shame," said Barnes, "that such ingenuity should have to be punished."

"It would be more of a shame if we let it go unpunished," said the customs chief as he started for the door.

As Forward prepared to escort Miss Richards to her apartments, the old man turned to Clancy:

"What did it cost you to impersonate the chauffeur?"

"Not a cent — he's a friend of mine."

"You don't seem surprised at this climax?"

Clancy smiled in his elfish way.

“ Why should I? When you cut out the personal concerning the leather bag, you also clipped another item from the paper.”

“ But I put that clipping in my pocket-book.”

“ Yes, but I bought another copy of the paper and found it concerned the story of the Dillington Pearl Necklace. The customs officers were all at sea over the strange smuggling case. I put two and two together and I knew that you would finally demonstrate that pearl necklaces were an infallible cure for indigestion.”

IX

THE ADVENTURE OF THE ANONYMOUS CARDS

BARNES, Forward and Clancy were spending an evening "at home." They sat in the bachelor apartment at Washington Square, puffing and smoking until the room resembled a locomotive roundhouse. The old man was in a reminiscent mood, and he told his young friends of many interesting and thrilling events of his earlier life.

In the midst of his talk, Clancy began idly handling some postal cards that lay on the table. He picked one up and unthinkingly read aloud: "It's never too late to mend."

Instantly he realized his indiscretion and exclaimed: "Chief, I hope you'll excuse me! I really didn't intend to read your personal letters!"

Barnes laughed.

"You may have 'em all if you want 'em."

Forward joined Clancy in a stare of mild surprise.

"For four consecutive days I received a postal-card without date, address, or signature. Each one contained an enigmatical proverb or warning type-written on the face of it. On the fifth day none came. After that, four in daily succession."

"May I examine them?" asked Forward.

"Certainly," and the old man tossed the cards to the lawyer.

Forward scrutinized them carefully and with gradually wrinkling brows. The sentences on the cards could hardly be regarded as threats, and yet some of them might be twisted into warnings.

They were as follows:

"Brag's a good dog, but Holdfast's a better."

"Love me little, love me long."

"Like master, like man."

"Time and tide wait for no man."

"Rob Peter to pay Paul."

"A man's house is his castle."

“Crosses are ladders that lead to Heaven.”

“Years know more than books.”

After some minutes the young man looked up with an impotent sigh.

“It’s too deep for me, Chief. What do you make of it?”

“I make nothing of it,” snapped the old man irritably; “the cards are anonymous. That’s enough for me. What’s the use of talking about such silly things?”

They smoked in silence for some moments. Presently the old man’s eye was attracted by the calendar. It was an enormous affair, with the date of each day printed on a separate sheet of paper.

The Chief riveted his eye on the two figures that stood out conspicuously against the smoke-laden atmosphere — 23.

“By Jove!” he exclaimed, “but that’s a reminder that I must send a telegram to the warden at Sing Sing!”

“The warden — Sing Sing?” repeated Forward.

"Well," said the Chief indulgently, "you boys were not in this affair, but I'm sure you'll be interested in it. It concerns Bill Tracy, whom I consider to be one of the cleverest crooks on two continents. I've always felt this deep down in my heart, but I'd never admit it to Bill. He takes more chances than any man in the business, and he's as slippery as an eel, but he tried the game once too often, and now he's being fed and lodged at the expense of the Commonwealth.

"It happened in this way. He went into an express office in broad daylight and stole five thousand dollars in bank notes from the cash drawer."

"How?" asked the astonished Irishman.

"You've seen those express offices. Half a dozen clerks doing routine. Well, in this particular office the clerk who had charge of the cash drawer wore a linen duster much bespattered with ink. Another one of this fellow's personal fads was a green shade that he wore over his eyes. He usually went out to lunch about noon and returned a little before one o'clock.

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“One day he came in ahead of the usual hour. At least, the other clerks thought so. They paid no attention to the man who walked in behind them wearing the green shade and the ink-bespattered duster. Later, they thought a great deal about it. They discovered that the money drawer had been rifled. Also, they felt pretty cheap when they learned that Bill Tracy, aided only by the green shade and the duster, had taken the money from under their very eyes.

“Well, to make a long story short, I captured Tracy. He was tried, convicted, and given five years in Sing Sing. That was thirty days ago — the 23rd of last month. He’s been on parole, but was scheduled to go to the penitentiary this morning. The date on that calendar reminds me that I must telegraph to the warden that I wish to lodge a formal detainer against Tracy.”

“A detainer?”

“Yes; when his five-year term expires I have enough evidence on other charges to keep him in prison for ten years more. But it’s necessary for

me to lodge a formal detainer against the fellow."

"How did he take his conviction?"

"Oh, as blandly and as smilingly as ever. But I made him wince. I told him that he was a bungler; that only a child in the infant class of crime could have been detected and arrested under the circumstances. But in reality his capture was a bit of sheer good luck on my part."

The telephone bell rang furiously as though some important person were demanding a hearing.

The old man answered the call.

"Is that Bromley Barnes?" came from the other end of the wire.

"Yes."

"Well, you are wanted at One Hundred and Sixty-Eighth Street — at the first drug store near Seventh Avenue. The druggist there will give you an important message."

"But —" began the Chief.

"That's all. Please come at once!" and the speaker hung up the receiver.

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Barnes was mad and mystified. He repeated the conversation to his two assistants.

"Still," said Clancy, "there may be an adventure in it."

Barnes pretended to be arranging the volumes in his bookcase. He lit a fresh stogie. He talked in an inconsequential way. They both recognized the symptoms. He was preparing to yield to the lure of the mysterious telephone call.

"Boys," he said finally, "there *might* be something in that message."

"It don't seem right to ignore it," responded Forward argumentatively.

"You might never forgive yourself," chimed in Clancy.

"Well, we'll go," declared the old man decisively, "and on the way I'll send that Tracy telegram to Sing Sing."

They started at once. Clancy, who was the last, paused to look at some bright object fastened to the outside panel of the door. Barnes noticed the halt and said in a half-embarrassed tone:

"Don't you recognize that?"

"No, I don't."

The old man turned up the gas in the hallway. Clancy and Forward stooped to take a look.

"Why, it's your picture!" exclaimed the lawyer.

"Yes," said the detective, "it's my photograph with an autograph attached. It's a little whim of mine. I had it screwed on there under that bit of glass. It's intended to serve notice on would-be robbers that I'm master of this house. The moment they see that — and I'm not trying to brag — they'll run away as fast as their legs will carry them. You know the old saying, 'an ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure.' This is a preventive."

"Suppose, though," said Forward, on second thought, "some thief should come along that did not know you or had never heard of you?"

Clancy stared at his colleague with undisguised scorn.

"The crook that never heard of the old man," he said, "is too insignificant to talk about. A fellow

like that — if there is such a stupid person — wouldn't be fit to rob children's play banks! ”

Barnes laughed softly. He was human and not insensible to praise. They hurried down stairs and out through the Arch and up Fifth Avenue. The detective halted at the first telegraph office. While he went in, Clancy and Forward stood outside and discussed the strange adventure.

The old man selected a desk in the corner of the office and wrote his telegram :

“ Will be up Monday to lodge detainers against Bill Tracy, confidence man. Meanwhile, accept wire as evidence of my intentions.”

In searching for his fountain pen, the Chief pulled out an empty envelope on which his name and address were typewritten. He laid this on the desk while he was scrawling his telegram. As he finished he discovered that some one was looking over his shoulder.

“ Clancy! Clancy! ” he said laughingly, “ you're more curious than a woman.”

But a strange voice answered him.

"I beg your pardon, but you've dropped something."

He turned sideways and saw a light object fluttering in the air. He bent over to pick it up. It proved to be a piece of blank paper. He turned impatiently to speak to the stranger, but he was gone — and so was the empty envelope.

He was very much chagrined over the incident, but he dispatched his telegram and joined his two friends. He questioned them guardedly concerning the people that had gone in and out of the telegraph office, but their replies threw no light on the curious happening.

After a conference lasting but a few minutes, they took a taxi to the One Hundred and Sixty-Eighth Street address. Barnes was strangely irritable. All three were burning with anticipation, but they managed to stifle the questions that were on the tips of their tongues and made the long ride in Quaker-like silence.

However, they finally reached their destination. It was a conventional up-town drug store. There

are hundreds precisely like it in New York City. The proprietor, a pale-faced young man, came to meet them.

“ You have a message for me? ” questioned the detective.

“ Are you Bromley Barnes? ”

“ I have that honor. ”

The druggist gave a sigh of relief.

“ I’m glad you came. I’m glad to get this message off my hands. ”

“ What is it? ”

“ Well, you are to go on up four blocks and ring the bell of the fourth house from the corner of this side of the street. You are to go there at exactly ten o’clock, and when the woman comes to the door you are to say that you came to see about the papering of the third story back. She will escort you to that room. ”

“ What are we to do then? ”

“ You are to be guided by circumstances — by what you find. ”

“ Gee! ” ejaculated Clancy, unable to restrain his

feeling, "this beats a tale from the 'Arabian Nights.'"

"Who gave you this message?" asked Barnes, assuming a cold and formal tone that was intended to quench the ardor of his assistant.

"An old man."

"Didn't you think it a peculiar message?" he asked.

"I did, indeed. I refused to have anything to do with it at first, but he pressed a ten-spot in my hand, and before you could say 'Jack Robinson,' he had dashed out of the door and was gone. After receiving such a fee I felt bound to follow his instructions to the letter. One of the conditions was that I was not to ask any questions and not to attempt to pry into his secret. I hope I haven't done anything wrong, Mr. Barnes."

"I hope not," retorted the old man dryly, "but that remains to be seen."

It was a few minutes of ten, but, jumping into the taxi, the three adventurers reached the door of the appointed house just as the hour was striking.

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They rang the bell, and a woman answered the summons.

"We came to see about the papering of the third story back," said Barnes, glibly repeating his lesson with parrot-like correctness.

"Come right up, gentlemen," she said.

They followed her along the narrow stairway, but before doing so each one felt in his hip pocket to make sure of a friend that had served him in many an hour of need. If they were being led into an ambuscade, they would, at least, give their lives dearly. On the way the detective made an attempt to draw the woman out.

"Who occupies the third story back?"

"An old gentleman."

"Has he been with you long?"

"No, he only came this afternoon. He engaged the room for a liberal price and gave me a week's rent in advance. He seemed awfully strange to me. His only requirement was that I was to be at the door at ten o'clock and let you gentlemen in. I was to lead you to the landing and let you go to the

room yourselves. Here it is. I'll carry out his directions by leaving you."

The light in the hallway was quite dim. For a moment the three men stood there irresolute. Then Clancy, with a pretense at courage which he did not feel, caught the knob of the door of the third story back and threw it open. Barnes and Forward marched into the room with their hands on the triggers of their pistols. Clancy struck a match and lighted the gas.

The room was empty!

With a feeble smile, they took their hands off their weapons. Barnes made a hasty appraisal of his surroundings. A sheet of paper lay on a table in the center of the room. It was the form and size of the blanks used by physicians in writing prescriptions. The old man picked it up. Clancy and Forward looked over his shoulder. This is what they read, written in a bold, cheerful hand:

"A wild goose chase has been known to cure an aggravated case of swelled head."

Barnes dropped the slip and it fluttered to the

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floor. The young men looked at him sidewise, but his face betrayed no emotion whatever.

He spoke coldly: "Let's go down town."

They followed him into the waiting cab. They hadn't gone many blocks when they were suddenly halted. Barnes poked his head out of the window. A man stood in the middle of the street, wildly gesticulating. It was the pale druggist who had delivered the message only a short time before.

"I want to see you!" shouted the excited one.

"I guess I want to see you," grunted the Chief.

"I've been cheated!" yelled the druggist.

"I guess I've been hoodwinked myself," chuckled the old man.

"Why not ask him what he wants?" suggested Clancy with undreamed-of wisdom.

"A good suggestion," laughed the detective, whose natural good humor was returning rapidly.

"Say, Mr. What's-your-name, what do you want, anyhow?"

"You know the man that left the message for

you? Well, that ten-dollar bill he gave me was a counterfeit!"

A chorus of laughter, the banging-to of a cab door, and the machine shot off, leaving an angry apothecary standing in the middle of the street, shaking his fist and calling on high heavens for vengeance.

When the creaking vehicle drew up in front of the Washington Square apartments each of the three men involuntarily experienced a queer sensation — a sort of mental sensing that something had happened.

The appearance of the housekeeper, Mrs. Hobbs, with glaring eyes and disheveled hair, did not tend to dispel their apprehension. It was some moments before the good woman could muster sufficient breath to express herself:

"He had the letter, Mr. Barnes," she said, gasping, "he had indeed, or I'd never have admitted him! Indeed I wouldn't! You know that, Mr. Barnes. You know —"

"I'd know a good deal more if you'd tell me what you're trying to talk about!" was the impatient retort.

“Why,” she exclaimed, with eyes wide open at the idea of any one not grasping her explanation, “why, the man and the letter and —”

The Chief raised his hand for silence.

“One moment, Mrs. Hobbs. Your news seems too portentous for a whole sentence. We’ll have to chop it up in little bits for mental digestion.”

Mrs. Hobbs stared at her star lodger as though he had gone mad.

“Now,” resumed the Chief, “take the man first. Who was he? What was he and why was he?”

The affair, in Mrs. Hobbs’ eyes, was too tragic for smiles. She spoke gravely, if somewhat incoherently:

“Why, sir, he came here a little while after you left to take the measure for the new rug.”

“I wanted no new rug!” said Barnes.

“That’s what I said, sir. But he persisted and said you would be very angry if I did not let him in. He said to-day was your birthday — the 23rd, you know — and that the rug was to be a present from an admirer. Besides, he showed me the letter with

your name on it. He said that was his authority."

Barnes groaned.

"The envelope that was nipped from me in the telegraph office!"

"We don't know yet what's happened," said Clancy, looking at Mrs. Hobbs.

"We'll find out for ourselves," said Barnes, starting at a double-quick pace for his rooms. The first evidence that something had happened was on the door. The photograph and autograph of the Chief had been pried off the panel. The bit of plate glass that covered it lay on the floor, broken. They entered the room. It was in confusion. An empty champagne bottle and some cracker dishes and a cheese holder proved that the uninvited visitor had enjoyed himself. A note was pinned to the tablecloth. It read:

"So sorry you were not at home when I called. However, I partook of your hospitality and enjoyed it immensely. I want to congratulate you on your wine. It was just dry enough to suit my taste. I have taken your photo and autograph as the memento of a very delightful occasion."

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Barnes said something that sounded very much like "damn." While he was trying to form an estimate of his probable losses a telegram came from the warden of Sing Sing. It conveyed the regrettable information that Mr. Bill Tracy, by impersonating a workman, had managed to elude his keepers and escape.

The Chief was so flabbergasted by this unexpected news that he had to sit down to recover his wind. Forward looked very grave, but Clancy in his trivial way, was fooling with the postal cards on the table. Mrs. Hobbs had handed in another since their return, so that there were nine cards in all.

Forward, happening to glance at the calendar, noticed a penciled note under the date. He went closer, and this is what he discovered:

23

B. B.'s Jonah Day

The lawyer could not restrain a smile, but he forbore to say anything to the Chief. The old man had troubles enough. Clancy was still fooling with the

postal-cards, building and rebuilding them as a child does with toy blocks. Suddenly the irrepressible let out a shriek of the war-whoop variety.

"What's the matter?" snapped Forward, whose nerves were on edge.

"I've got it!" shouted Clancy, jumping to his feet.

"Got what?"

"Nine cards. They form a perfect acrostic."

"An acrostic?"

"Yes, don't you know," he cried impatiently, "a sort of puzzle by which you form words out of the first letter of each line or sentence."

Clancy laid the cards out in order on the table.

One glance was sufficient. The acrostic solved the problem of the whole night's misadventures:

"Brag's a good dog, but Holdfast's a better."

"It's never too late to mend."

"Love me little, love me long."

"Like master, like man."

"Time and tide wait for no man."

"Rob Peter to pay Paul."

"A man's house is his castle."

"Crosses are ladders that lead to Heaven."

"Years know more than books."

"Boys," said the old man, weakly, "if you don't mind, I think I'll go to bed. I need the rest!"

Barnes bade them good night cheerfully enough, but he looked a bit sheepish.

"Boys," he repeated, in farewell, "keep this night's business a dead secret. If the newspapers ever get hold of it they'd laugh me out of New York!"

X

ADVENTURE OF THE CLEOPATRA NECKLACE

It doesn't pay to advertise — always. At least that was the conclusion of the trustees of the great Cosmopolitan Museum after the antiquarians of the country were thrown into a state of hysteria over the strange disappearance of the Cleopatra necklace. The sensational business started with a newspaper paragraph in the *Clarion*, reading something like this:

“The trustees of the Cosmopolitan Museum have added to the collection of curios in Egyptian Hall a rare old necklace which they say belonged, beyond the shadow of a doubt, to the famous sorceress of the Nile. As a relic of the civilization which existed three thousand years before Christ, the collar is naturally priceless. Its intrinsic value is placed at \$30,000.”

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The announcement brought a crush of visitors to Egyptian Hall. The curator, Dr. Randall-Brown, had provided a strong plate glass case for the precious relic, and had given it the place of honor in the very center of the marble-tiled hall. The collar of the late — very late — Queen of Egypt reposed on a velvet-covered stand which displayed its rare qualities to excellent advantage. The setting was of some curious metal that was neither gold or silver, but the necklace itself was a collection of amethysts, pearls and diamonds.

Egyptian Hall was one of a number of large rooms in the Cosmopolitan Museum, which was part of the educational system of the famous University where some eighteen hundred young men, from all parts of the world, were preparing themselves for their attack on the world. The Cosmopolitan Museum, it might be added, was regarded as burglar-proof, as well as fire-proof. One watchman was employed during the day and another by night. George Young, the day watchman, also acted as a sort of guide, and when the trouble came he ad-

mitted that he had not remained in Egyptian Hall continuously; that, at one time, he had been out of the room for fifteen minutes.

It was Dr. Randall-Brown, the curator, who first made the astonishing discovery. He had brought a connoisseur from Harvard to look at the treasure.

"You will notice," said the curator, gloating over the prize as only an antiquarian can, "that there are three pearls, three amethysts and three diamonds in succession, and after that they come in twos and then in ones."

But even as he spoke, he realized that this orderly arrangement no longer existed. One of the amethysts had been misplaced. Filled with the gloomiest forebodings, he examined the outside of the case. Casually, all seemed well, but the use of a magnifying glass proved that the twelve screws which fastened the case to the flat table, on which it reposed, had been disturbed.

"Close the doors," cried the curator, nervously, "and we'll look into this business."

The case was opened and the astounding discov-

ery was made that some one had taken the stones from the priceless Cleopatra necklace and had substituted paste diamonds and imitation gems in their place.

The news, which leaked out in spite of the caution of the trustees, made a tremendous sensation. The telegraph and the cable were called into requisition to beseech the police everywhere, and the learned men of the world, to join in the search for the missing treasure. Dealers in precious stones and pawnbrokers were given the description of the gems taken from the necklace, with instructions to arrest the first person who offered such stones for sale. Their curious size and shape, it was added, would make their identification comparatively easy.

The local police made a determined effort to locate the stolen property and to unravel the mystery of the robbery. Every one connected with the museum, in any capacity whatever, was subjected to a rigid inquiry but without result. The curator and the trustees wrung their hands in despair. They were estimable gentlemen, but their brows were so

high and their intellects so keen that they were absolutely helpless in solving every-day problems of life. The University was becoming the laughing stock of the world. It was inconceivable, said outsiders, that such a crime could be committed without the police speedily detecting the criminal.

It was at this stage of the game that Barnes, going into the *Clarion* office, met his friend Curley, of that paper, and was given this command: "Solve the museum mystery." He had been given many difficult orders in the past, but this seemed the most impossible of all. Perhaps they were trying to have some fun with him at the office. "If so," he said to himself, "I'll put the laugh on the other side."

That afternoon he called up Dr. Randall-Brown and told him that he had been commissioned to solve the mystery. The learned curator smiled through his perplexity and said fervently:

"Do so, and you'll win my everlasting gratitude."

"But," insisted Barnes, "I must have your authority to cross-examine the employees and to conduct the investigation in any way I see fit."

“ You have all that,” replied the doctor. “ I’ll see that no obstacles are placed in your way.”

The first thing that Barnes considered was the substitution of the fake necklace for the real one in the day time. He interrogated George Young, the day watchman, at some length, and that officer persisted in his statement that his longest length of absence from Egyptian Hall was for fifteen minutes.

“ Didn’t you go out for luncheon? ”

“ No, sir; I carried it with me as usual and ate it at that little desk over in the corner of the room, where I had a full view of the case containing the relic.”

“ Have you had many visitors? ”

“ Yes, sir; especially since the necklace came.”

“ How many at one time? ”

“ The number varied. Sometimes the room was crowded, and again there would be only two or three.”

The detective reflected that it might have been possible for a trained gang of thieves to do the job in fifteen minutes. One man might have stood

guard at the door while a half-dozen confederates unscrewed the case and made the substitution. But, of course, they would be subjected to interruption. Altogether, Barnes felt rather skeptical about his theory.

His next move was to put Adam Markley, the night watchman, through the third degree. The results were far from satisfactory. Adam Markley had been with the museum for fifteen years, and his reputation for integrity was very high. Indeed, he almost took a childish interest in the rare objects that were in his charge. He was an illiterate man, but what he lacked in education he supplied with enthusiasm and devotion to duty.

Dr. Randall-Brown shook his head smilingly when Barnes spoke of the night watchman.

"It's all right to put him on the griddle," he said, "but you might as well suspect me as old Adam Markley."

"I do suspect you," began the detective.

The venerable Egyptologist gave a start of surprise. He spoke sharply:

“ Well of all the cheeky —”

Barnes lifted an interrupting hand.

“ I suspect you and every one connected with this place,” he finished. “ You know,” he added, “ I am working on the French principle that you’re all guilty until you prove your innocence.”

“ Ah,” was the relieved reply, “ that’s different, but I’m sure you’re wasting your time on the night watchman.”

Adam Markley told his story in a straightforward way, and although he was called upon to repeat it, he never once deviated from any of the essential details. He was cherubic in appearance, and in spite of his years, his cheeks were round and rosy, and his blue eyes looked out at his inquisitor with child-like innocence and freshness. He constantly ran his hand through his brown hair, and his manner seemed to say, “ Why don’t you look for the thief instead of bothering with me ? ”

Barnes, not content with examining the employees, made an exhaustive investigation into their antecedents. He paid particular attention to the two

watchmen. Young, he found, was a married man with a large family living in a modest house in the suburbs. Markley resided in bachelor apartments in the city, living comfortably but inexpensively. Those who knew him were loud in his praise. Some of his older friends recalled him as a child. He had a brother, and the two of them, with long brown curls and rosy cheeks, went about hand in hand like two babes in the wood. The brother, who, unfortunately, had left the straight and narrow path, was now living in the West.

Adam Markley, in the course of his examination, let fall one remark which Barnes thought might develop into a clew. He said that Professor von Hermann had paid five or six visits to the museum and had stood before the case containing the necklace like a man fascinated. Professor von Hermann was one of the world's greatest archæologists, and there is no doubt that he keenly felt the disappointment which comes to such a man when a rival — even though that rival be an institution — secures the prize he covets. Barnes, in the course of his in-

vestigation, learned that the professor, on one occasion, had told a friend that the only thing he needed to complete his own collection was just such a necklace as the trustees of the Cosmopolitan Museum had fondly believed to be safe in Egyptian Hall. Barnes called at the professor's home with the idea of gaining some impressions of the venerable connoisseur, but that gentleman bluntly informed him through a servant that he "had no time to give to gossiping detectives."

Barnes relished this greatly, and made a mental resolution to remember the eccentricity — or worse — of the savant at the proper time and place. In the meantime he called upon the curator of the museum for the purpose of asking some further questions.

"Well, my man," cried Dr. Randall-Brown, with wet-blanket cordiality, "I suppose you've come to tell me you're stumped."

"Nothing of the kind," protested the detective.

"You haven't found the thief?"

"No," admitted Barnes, "not yet, but I've got a bully good theory."

"What is it?"

"I'm not ready to give it out. What I want to know from you is whether you haven't forgotten to tell me something."

"Sir!" exclaimed the doctor, with a rising and highly indignant inflection, "I've told you all I know."

"You were in your office in this building the day before the theft was discovered?"

"I was."

"Did anything unusual occur?"

"No, sir."

"You stepped out of your office for a few minutes?"

"Yes, I was in and out several times."

"And once, when you returned, you found a young man fumbling in the drawer of your desk?"

The curator's face lengthened.

"You're right, Barnes, I forgot all about that. It seemed such a trifling matter."

"It's the trifles that count, doctor. Who was the young man?"

"I never learned. He ran out as I came in. I imagine it was one of the students from the University."

"Wasn't he dark-complexioned?"

"Now that you mention it, I believe that he was."

"Haven't they some Egyptian students in the University?"

"By Jove, they have five or six. My boy, I believe you're on the right track!"

Barnes sighed.

"I doubt it, but I've got to clean all of these things up, you know."

"Shall I send for the Egyptian students?"

"No — at least not at present. By the way, do you know Professor von Hermann?"

"Yes."

"Has he ever said anything about the necklace?"

"Yes, he told me that his collection was incomplete without it and that our collection was incomplete without his Egyptian antiquities. He won-

dered if the trustees would consider a suggestion to sell him the necklace. I told him the proposition was preposterous."

"He thought the collection should be merged?"

"Exactly, only his plan would be to have the tail wag the dog."

Six days had now gone and Barnes apparently was no nearer the truth than he had been in the beginning. Every day regularly he reported at the *Clarion* office and found against his name on the assignment book in the *Clarion* office the command, "Solve the museum mystery." The city editor, in his dry mirthless way, did his best to tease the emergency man.

"If you want to give up the assignment, Barnes," he said, "I'll let you report the meetings of the Universal Peace Union."

"No," said the baited one, clicking his teeth with determination, "I'll finish this job first if you don't mind."

That night he enlisted the aid of his friend and fellow worker, Clancy.

“ You needn’t tell me what you want,” said the loyal Con, “ I’ll go with you anywhere without asking questions.”

At midnight the two of them were prowling about the dark stone walls of the Cosmopolitan Museum. The place was on the outskirts of the city, and at that hour was lonely and deserted. A dim light shone from one of the small windows near the entrance. It was too high for either of them to look inside.

“ I’d give a dollar for a soap box or something to stand on,” grunted Barnes.

Clancy never hesitated for an instant.

“ Let’s play horsey,” he said.

“ What do you mean? ”

“ Why, I’ll get down on my hands and knees,” quoth the faithful one, “ and you can stand on my back and peep inside.”

It was no sooner said than done. The improvised stand proved to be just the right hight. By clutching the window sill with his finger tips Barnes was able to draw himself up and peer into the little room that led to the museum.

There sat old Markley tilted back in a chair with his feet on the window ledge reading a book. A half smile wreathed his cherubic face, and he had the appearance of a man who, as one of our Presidents once remarked, was "at peace with the world and the rest of mankind."

There was certainly nothing to excite suspicion in appearance or the action of the venerable person, and yet the mere sight of him seemed to throw Barnes into a state of intense excitement.

"I've got it! I've got it!" he whispered hoarsely to his friend, as he jumped from Clancy's willing back.

"Got what?"

"Never mind," was the impatient retort, as he grabbed his associate by the coat sleeve; "come with me."

"What are you going to do now?" ventured Clancy.

"Commit burglary, I hope," ejaculated Barnes fervently.

Clancy looked at Barnes with real concern. He

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wondered whether he could, by any possibility, be taking leave of his senses. In spite of this momentary doubt he followed his friend with the blind devotion which was his most becoming trait. Soon after leaving the museum they were able to get a cab and in a little while the vehicle, pursuant to Barnes's directions, drew up in front of Adam Markley's lodgings.

"This is the part of the job that I dislike, but desperate cases require desperate methods."

"How in the world can you get in?"

"This is one feature of the case where credit belongs to the police department. They secured skeleton keys in order to search old Markley's rooms."

"Then what's the use of your doing it over again?"

"Oh, they might have forgotten something," was the laughing rejoinder.

The two men entered the house noiselessly, crept silently up the stairs and soon found themselves in the modest habitation of the old watchman. It con-

sisted of a bedroom and a sitting room. Barnes paid no attention to the sleeping chamber, but proceeded at once to the living apartment. This was plainly but comfortably furnished. A roll-top desk stood in one corner and a big Morris chair in the other. The left wall contained some family photographs, and Barnes gazed long and earnestly at one of these representing two young men. The other wall held a large engraving of General Grant on horseback. Presently Barnes went to the desk. It was locked. Without any evidence of compunction he pulled out a sharp instrument and began to twist the lock.

"You're going pretty far," said Clancy gravely.

"Yes," retorted the irrepressible one, "and the farther I go the more I learn."

The lock yielded and the top rolled up. Barnes grabbed a handful of papers and went through them like a conjurer doing a trick. Finally he reached a little yellow slip. He read what was written on the sheet and gave a gurgle of delight. He hastily slipped all the papers back in place and pulled the

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desk down in a way that automatically locked it, and cried out cheerfully:

“ We’re through, Clancy, old boy; nothing to do until to-morrow.”

After breakfast next day Barnes called Dayton, Ohio, on the long distance telephone. It took him some time to get the person he wanted, but by noon his face was wreathed in smiles.

“ It’s all right,” he exclaimed gaily to Clancy; “ I want you to meet me at Markley’s room the day after to-morrow at eight o’clock in the morning.”

“ Why? ”

“ Oh, we’re going to have a little surprise party.”

At the hour appointed Barnes and Clancy were at the modest quarters of the old watchman. So was Dr. Randall-Brown. The curator was annoyed.

“ I don’t like this,” he exclaimed testily; “ I don’t relish the idea of breaking into a man’s rooms without absolute proof.”

Barnes smiled.

“ If we had absolute proof, we wouldn’t have to do it.”

"Well, what do you expect to prove by coming here?"

"That depends entirely on the result of my experiment. We'll know all about it in a few minutes."

As he spoke, heavy footsteps were heard on the stairway, and in a few minutes Markley entered the room. He seemed dazed at the unexpected sight of strangers in his apartments.

"What's—what's the meaning of this?" he stammered.

"You know," said Barnes, sharply.

"I don't," he retorted with a trace of defiance.

Barnes advanced until he stood directly in front of the old man. He pointed an accusing finger at him. He spoke sternly.

"I charge you with the theft of the Cleopatra necklace from the Cosmopolitan Museum!"

The color slowly receded from the cheeks of the man's cherubic face. He sank weakly into the easy chair. It was some moments before he spoke, and then it was in a hushed and trembling voice.

“Where’s — where’s your proof?”

“In the necklace itself — we’ve found its hiding place.”

The man’s glance went waveringly about the room, and then it halted and rested on the engraving of General Grant. Barnes had been watching him like a hawk, and upon that significant halt he rushed over to the picture.

“Yes,” he said, as if answering a question, “it does hang a bit crooked,” and, as he straightened the frame, there was a crashing sound from behind the engraving and a small woolen bag fell to the floor.

Barnes picked it up quickly, and opening the top emptied the contents on the table. There before the astonished gaze of the onlookers, were the pearls, amethysts and diamonds that had composed the Cleopatra necklace.

Markley lay back in his chair, too stupefied to speak. Dr. Randall-Brown broke forth in a cry of anguish.

“This is horrible! No one living could have convinced me that Adam Markley was a thief!”

"He isn't," said Barnes, coolly.

The curator pointed a despairing finger at the gems and then at the cowering man in the chair.

"There," he cried angrily, "how do you explain this evidence away?"

Barnes paused for a moment as though listening, and then said:

"If I'm not mistaken, the explanation will be here in a moment."

He had scarcely ceased speaking when the door opened, and in walked a rosy-cheeked, brown-haired, cherubic-faced person. The detective gave a wave of his hand in the direction of the newcomer.

"Gentlemen," he said, with something like dramatic effect, "let me present to you Mr. Adam Markley."

Every one shouted with surprise.

"But who," exclaimed Dr. Randall-Brown, pointing to the creature in the arm chair, "is this man?"

"That," said Barnes, "is Jim Markley, thief and general all round confidence man. He had been

living in Dayton, O., but when he read of your \$30,000 necklace he couldn't resist the temptation to come here and get it. How he got it is a long story that will have to be told in the court, but in the meantime it is sufficient for you to know that he first had his twin brother lured away from here and then, clothing himself in his gray uniform, personated him at the museum and easily got away with the gems during the night."

While he talked the two brothers were staring at each other. Adam's eyes were humid with unshed tears, but the face of the black sheep now betrayed only cynical indifference. The resemblance between the two was remarkable. They were as much alike as two peas in a pod. After the necessary formalities had ended, they separated, one to take his place in a felon's dock, the other to resume his position as a faithful and trusted employee.

That night Clancy ventured to question Bromley Barnes.

"I thought at first," he said, "that the culprit was either the student who was found going through Dr.

Randall-Brown's desk, or Professor von Hermann, the Egyptologist."

Barnes shook his head.

"The boy was hunting for a set of questions to be used in the coming examination, while the sight of the necklace simply caused Professor von Hermann to give his rare collection to the Cosmopolitan Museum."

"You got your clew the night you peeped in at Markley, didn't you?" persisted Clancy.

"I did," was the reply, "and the clew was in the book he was reading. I knew that Adam Markley could scarcely write his own name and that he could read only with great difficulty. Therefore, when I discovered that watchman reading the second volume of Gibbon's 'Rise and Fall of the Roman Empire' with ease, I knew he wasn't Adam Markley. The rest was easy. The finding of the telegram that lured Adam to Dayton, and then getting into communication with him over the long-distance telephone was simply a matter of course."

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“What’s the moral as far as Jim Markley is concerned?”

“I don’t know,” grinned Barnes, “unless it’s the old one ‘where ignorance is bliss ’tis folly to be wise.’”

XI

ADVENTURE OF THE BARITONE SINGER

It was Kelly, the Chief of Detectives, who let Barnes into what afterwards came to be known as the "Mystery of the Baritone Singer." The old man was just considering the advisability of taking an extended vacation when the telephone rang and Kelly asked him to come down to a certain number on the avenue.

"I've got a case here," he said, "that threatens to develop into a first-class problem. I'd like you to take a look at it while all the evidence is fresh. I'm willing to divide honors with you."

Barnes accepted the invitation with alacrity and took Clancy along. The veteran had a sneaking admiration for Kelly and had coöperated with him in the solution of more than one big case. Kelly actu-

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ally had ideas and was one of the few policemen in Barnes's acquaintance who was not as dull as he looked.

Kelly was waiting for them at the doorway of the house on the avenue, and acted as their escort. They passed through an elegantly furnished hallway and on to the stairway leading to the upper part of the house. At the landing, a frightened girl turned and opened the door of what seemed to be the living room of the house. The sight that met their astonished gaze caused Barnes to give a gasp of surprise. Stretched prostrate on the floor was an elderly man with his arms extended. On the carpet next to his right hand was a glass paper weight, as though it had just slipped from his grasp. A tiny pool of blood had trickled from a wound in his head.

The detective dropped down on his hands and knees and examined the prostrate body. It was rigid, and life was extinct. The old man turned to Kelly.

"You might as well have the body removed to the bed room — then we can look around."

With the aid of the servants, Kelly succeeded in removing the corpse to the second story front room. As soon as Kelly returned to the living room Barnes resumed his examination of the apartment. It presented a scene of disorder. A costly velvet cloth had been torn from a massive walnut table in the center of the apartment. A half dozen books and magazines were scattered about the floor. Indeed, two of the books gaped with broken bindings as though they had been used as weapons. The shattered glass over a picture of George Washington on the wall indicated that the father of his country had been the unwilling target for one of the missiles. A pair of spectacles (also broken), an ash receiver, a Billiken, a spilled bottle of ink, and an overturned chair completed the wreck.

The master of the house was evidently a man of refinement who loved music. The room contained a piano, an organ, a harp, a phonograph and a mandolin. Book cases lined the walls on one side of the apartment. An easel held an open dictionary, while on a couch lay the torn pages containing the words

and music of "My Old Kentucky Home." There was a bay window in the rear of the room, but the chief noted that the sashes were tightly closed and fastened with iron clasps. At this stage of the inquiry the door opened timidly and Marie Hearne, a niece of the dead man, came into the room. She looked very white and very frightened.

"You are just in time, Miss Hearne," said Barnes gently. "I want to ask you a question."

She flung herself into a chair and began to rock to and fro nervously.

"I understand your feelings," said the detective, "but I want you to give me a plain story of all that has occurred in this house to-night."

"I can't!" she cried; "it is out of the question."

"But you will have to do so sooner or later. Please tell me now."

"You do not know what you ask," she shrieked; "it would kill me to say anything against Guy."

"Guy?" questioned Barnes, with upraised eyebrows.

"Oh, no," she corrected herself hastily. "I didn't mean that. Please don't mind what I say. You see that I am overwrought and not responsible for what I am saying."

"I have no desire to harass you," insinuated the detective in his caressing way; "indeed, I would like to help you if it is in my power."

The tears welled forth and relieved her from the strain under which she had been laboring. Indeed, she exhibited the common feminine appearance after a good cry. She seemed relieved. Barnes saw his opportunity and seized it.

"Now, Miss Hearne," he said, "I am prepared to hear your story."

She looked at Barnes apprehensively.

"I — I — that is, I fear publicity."

Kelly spoke up in the tone of one who has authority:

"You can depend absolutely upon his discretion. I vouch for Mr. Barnes and Mr. Clancy, too."

Miss Hearne seemed satisfied. She spoke slowly, as if trying to be accurate and fair in her statements.

“Uncle is a Southerner. He made a great deal of money in the iron business in Tennessee, but retired some years ago and settled in New York. We lived in apartments at first, but finally one of his friends, a lineal descendant of the early Dutch settlers, induced him to buy the house we are in now. I don't want to bore you with unimportant details, but you will see that all this is leading up to the affair of to-night.”

“Go ahead, Miss Hearne,” interjected Kelly.

“Well, the house is comfortable and roomy, as you notice,” she continued, “but it did not seem to supply all that Uncle needed. He has never had any time for society as that term is generally understood, but he is a man with a very sociable disposition, being fond of company and passionately attached to music. Well, to shorten my story, we went to Steinway Hall one afternoon to attend a concert. One of the artists was Mr. Guy Avondale, a baritone of exceptional power. For an encore, he sang ‘My Old Kentucky Home,’ and he made a conquest of uncle's heart.

"A few weeks after the concert Mr. Avondale was a guest at our house. For such a talented singer he was exceptionally modest. His manners were good, he made splendid company, and altogether we had every reason to be fond of him. He sang for us frequently, and it was uncle's delight to get him in the living room to sing the dear old plantation songs of the South."

The young woman paused at this part of the recital, as if loath to say any more. But Barnes encouraged her in his friendly way:

"Go on, Miss Hearne, and remember that you have friendly listeners."

"I dislike to speak of my personal affairs," she said modestly, "but I must. I might say truthfully, that in the beginning I had no more than a passing interest in Guy Avondale. But before many weeks had gone by that interest became profound. You will understand my present position, gentlemen, when I tell you that I love him passionately."

"Events progressed so rapidly that a week ago he proposed to me, and I accepted, providing he could

get uncle's consent. He felt very confident of winning that, and so did I, but our hopes were destined to be shattered. To-night was the time agreed upon when Guy should 'beard the lion in his den,' as he humorously phrased it.

"Just before the hour when Guy was to arrive, I ventured to broach the matter to Uncle, and he said he would never consent to the match. He went further than that, and accused Guy of being a fortune hunter. Incidentally, I want to say that I do not believe the charge. Guy is advancing rapidly in his profession. He is to sing in grand opera next season. I know that, because he showed me the five-year contract that he signed. And I firmly believe that in a few years he will be a great man."

"Please go on with your narrative," gently insisted the detective, fearing a never-ending rhapsody over the perfections of the singer.

"I'm going on," she said, with a self-willed toss of her little head, "but I've got to tell you all of it."

"What else did your uncle say?"

"He told me that he had hoped to marry me into

one of the wealthy families of the town. He said that he had some one in view that was distantly related to the Astorbilts. Anyhow, I left the room weeping, and when I got down stairs I found Guy waiting for me in the parlor. He noticed that my eyes were red and insisted on knowing the cause. I told him all that Uncle had said and he was furious."

"What did he say?" asked Barnes.

"He said he was going upstairs to tell Uncle just what he thought of him. I begged him not to get into a quarrel for my sake."

"What else did he say?" persisted the detective.

"He — he said that love was the only excuse for marriage, and that if Uncle put money or position above love, he was not fit to live. He was very much wrought up and his wild talk distressed me. I told him that Uncle had forbidden me to see him any more, and I thought we should separate — at least, for the time being. He was sulky about it, but I said 'Good night' to him and came up in my

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room to throw myself on the bed and have a good cry. I left him standing in an irresolute way in the hallway."

"Then what happened?"

"I fell asleep crying. When I woke up I knew it must be quite late. Something prompted me to go down stairs, but no one was there. I came up slowly, and noticed that there was a light in the living room. The door was shut, but I could see the light streaming from one of the windows into the side yard. I knew by that Uncle was still awake, and I was filled with a desire to go in and throw myself at his feet and plead my cause. I knew that, after all, he could never refuse me anything that was necessary for my happiness. I had my hand on the knob of the door, when I was startled by a strong baritone voice breaking into song. It was Guy's voice. There can be no mistake about that. I could tell it among ten million. He was singing 'My Old Kentucky Home.' The words rang out superbly. I stood there listening, enraptured, to the old refrain:

'The sun shines bright in my old Kentucky home,
In my old Kentucky home, far away.'

"It would not do to disturb them. I crept quietly to my room and waited. Surely, I thought, Guy must have pleaded successfully. Presently the singing ceased. I heard the front door close with a bang. Ten — fifteen minutes passed, and I determined to go down and hear my fate. I tapped on the door of the living room. No response came, and I turned the knob and walked in, and was horrified at the sight of my uncle's senseless body. I screamed. Aunt rushed a servant for the doctor and then telephoned for the police."

There was a long pause at the conclusion of the narrative. Finally Kelly said:

"What is the address of Guy Avondale?"

"Well," she said hesitatingly, "he has a flat on W. 110th st., but he is usually at a studio on E. 10th st. Besides that, he sings several times a week at the Church of the Golden Gates."

Barnes made a note of the addresses and said

good-by to Miss Hearne. As they reached the front door the journalist turned to the servant girl.

"Susan," he said abruptly, but with easy familiarity, "did Mr. Guy Avondale go up to Mr. Fulton's room last night?"

"Yes, sir," she replied unthinkingly; then, with sudden terror, "I hope I haven't said anything wrong, sir."

"Not at all. You never go wrong in telling the truth, Susan. But how do you know that the young man went upstairs?"

"Because a messenger came here with a telegram for Mr. Avondale, and I delivered it to him personally. I supposed he was in the parlor and I called to him but the answer came from the head of the stairs, as though he had just come out of the living room."

"Thank you very much, Susan, and good-night."

As they reached the sidewalk, Kelly accosted the policeman on the beat:

"Well, Jake," he exclaimed cheerfully, "anything going on about here?"

"No, Mr. Kelly," responded the officer. "I saw Reddy Brown hanging around here earlier in the evening, but he's gone now."

"I thought he was in Sing Sing."

"Released this morning," replied the policeman.

"Do you think he's the fellow you're after?" asked Clancy, as they moved away.

"I'll know before daylight," said Barnes.

Before the three men separated the detective asked Kelly to follow out a certain line of work and promised to meet him the next day. That night he sat smoking one stogie after another in his room and all the while thinking. At midnight, when he turned in, there was a smile of triumph on his face. The first thing in the morning he called at the Fulton home to make a second examination of the library, and when he finished the smile was actually expansive. A little later he met Kelly and Clancy.

"Well, boys," he cried, throwing away the stump of his weed and lighting a fresh one, "what luck?"

"Good and bad," said Kelly, taking the initiative in replying.

“Put it in plain English,” suggested Barnes.

“Well,” answered the detective, “I went to Avondale’s flat on W. 110th st., and found that he had left there at about six o’clock last night. He has not returned since.”

“Sure he didn’t return this morning?”

“Positive. The janitor assures me also that it is the first night that he has failed to return home since he rented the flat. He has won the reputation of being a man of very regular habits, and the janitor, who regards him as a friend and counselor, is very much disturbed over his absence.”

“How about the studio on E. 10th st.?”

“He has not been there either. That is regarded as very singular, because he had a positive engagement at 3 o’clock this afternoon. He was to rehearse an opera in which he is to sing shortly.”

“Well, son,” said Barnes, turning to Clancy, “what have you to say for yourself?”

“I have to say that the bird has flown, and you might as well give up the chase?”

“How do you know?”

“ Why, I went to the Church of the Golden Gates. He was to take part in a song service that began at seven o'clock. But he wasn't there. He has been singing at the church for two years and it is the first time he has ever been absent.”

“ What do you think about it? ” asked Clancy, anxiously. “ Was it the singer or the crook from Sing Sing? ”

Barnes took a prolonged puff at his stogie. He ignored the last part of the question.

“ I think your reports confirm my evidence,” he said.

“ What is that? ”

“ That Avondale is now in Boston.”

“ In Boston? ” they cried in chorus.

“ Yes, in Boston. I discovered that the telegram which was delivered to him last night was a summons to Boston. Who it was from I haven't learned, but I imagine he took the first train after leaving the Fulton house.”

“ What are you going to do about it? ” asked Kelly.

"Simply wait for his return," was the calm reply. "He'll come back to New York. They always do. I was at the station to-night, but he did not arrive. I've got a man on my lookout now, but I won't anticipate any results to-night. From what I have learned of Avondale's tastes and habits, he'll travel on the Colonial Express. I want you two to be there to-morrow evening. Here's a description of the man and his photograph. If he comes in on that train, get him."

"You bet I'll get him!" retorted the detective.

At the same hour the following night a taxicab drove up to Barnes' apartments, and Kelly and Clancy alighted, followed by a tall, broad-shouldered, athletic fellow with curly hair and a slight blonde mustache.

"Barnes," said Kelly, "I want you to meet Mr. Guy Avondale."

"Charmed," responded the young fellow grasping the proffered hand, "although for the life of me I can't understand why I am given the pleasure."

"I want you to make a visit with me," said Barnes

significantly, "a visit that may be of great importance to you."

"Go as far as you like," was the smiling rejoinder, and the four men climbed into the electric vehicle which was headed in the direction of the Fulton mansion. The journey was made rapidly and in silence. As the machine slowed up in front of the brownstone house, Barnes said carelessly:

"That was a sad thing about Mr. Fulton."

"What about him?"

"Knocked senseless in his library the night before last."

Avondale gasped.

"You amaze me! It's the first I've heard of it."

"Plays his part well," whispered Clancy to Kelly.

"Yes, he's a cool one, all right," was the muffled respons.

In the parlor, Marie Hearne, white faced and stern, was waiting them. The singer rushed over to greet the girl.

"Marie," he cried, "I'm amazed and shocked at the news I've just heard."

She shrank from him.

"You were in the room with Uncle."

"I?" he exclaimed, "you're terribly mistaken!"

"How can you deny it?" she cried, with a burst of indignation. "I heard you — I heard you singing."

Barnes held up his hands to stop the words that were on the lips of the young man.

"Tell me briefly what happened that night."

"There isn't much to tell," replied Avondale, with evident frankness, "I came here to speak to Mr. Fulton on a very personal matter. Something Marie — Miss Hearne — told me made me very indignant. I resolved to go upstairs and tell her uncle what I thought of him. She begged me not to do so. She bade me good night and left me standing in the hallway. I stood there irresolute for some time. Finally I went upstairs and had my hand on the knob of the door when I heard the voice of one of the servants calling my name. I came down stairs and Susan, the maid, gave me a telegram. It

was from Boston, telling me that my brother was at the point of death. I decided to postpone seeing Mr. Fulton. I took the first train. Fortunately my brother rallied and is now on the road to recovery. I returned and here I am."

"My friends," exclaimed Barnes, as Avondale finished, "you have heard the truth. Mr. Avondale is perfectly innocent of any wrong. I have the real culprit in that room now."

They looked at him in perfect amazement.

"Come with me," commanded the veteran.

They followed him into the apartment. An object stood in the center of the table covered with a cloth.

"Here's the cause of all the trouble," cried Barnes.

With that, he threw off the cover, revealing a phonograph. He gave the lever of the machine a twist and immediately the apartment was filled with the strains of

"The sun shines bright in my old Kentucky home,
In my old Kentucky home, far away."

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It was in Avondale's best voice. A cry of delight greeted the old song. Marie flew into the outstretched arms of the young singer.

"Can you ever forgive me?" she cried.

"I can and will," he said magnanimously, "but I'll never make another record for your uncle's phonograph."

"The thing's as plain as day," remarked Barnes, ignoring this flagrant exhibition of love. "Your uncle was suddenly seized by an attack of vertigo, and, in falling, he grasped the table cloth, throwing the books and papers all over the floor, and catapulting one missile straight into the picture on the wall. His head struck the fender and resulted in concussion of the brain. That was the real cause of his death, and it will be so certified by the coroner's physician."

"Will this mean a marriage?" queried Clancy, curiously, as they trudged down the avenue.

The old man chuckled softly.

"If I were as sure of Heaven as they are of matrimony, I'd be a happy man!"

XII

ADVENTURE OF THE AMSTERDAM ANTIQUES

"EVERY day in the week," soliloquized Barnes, lounging idly by the window of his Washington Square apartments, and watching the play of the light and shadow on the beautiful Arch, "I am compelled to settle a conflict between inclination and duty. Duty wins, of course, but I must confess that it's becoming a bit irksome. What happens this morning? Why, I buy a rare first edition of Petroleum V. Nasby's 'Swingin' Round the Circle,' and before I have even a chance to look it over I get a hurry call from the Custom House to clean up a problem concerning stolen antiques. I'm no slave. Why should —"

"I beg your pardon, Chief," interrupted Clancy, "but were you talking to me?"

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Barnes wheeled around and faced his assistant.

“ No, but I’m willing.”

“ What’s the case? ”

“ Stolen antiques. It’s in the line with the theft of famous copes and altar cloths brought over here by sacrilegious rascals and sold to suddenly rich oil and steel men to adorn freak mansions. In this instance, it happens to be a case of small ivory carvings made by the famous artist, Artus Quellinus, of Antwerp. They were pilfered from the Museum in Amsterdam, taken in daylight from the place where they have stood for years, just beneath the celebrated painting of the ‘ Night Guard ’ by Rembrandt.”

“ Any clews? ”

“ None worth talking about. The confidential agents of the Treasury Department in London, Paris, and Amsterdam have been on the case, but the best they can say is that they believe the thief is on his way to the United States, and that, in their opinion, he has taken passage on the *Eagle Point*.

“ Why, that’s due this afternoon! ”

"It is, indeed."

"Don't you think you'd better start out on the case?"

"I don't know," was the indolent reply. "I want to read Petroleum Nasby and I don't want to investigate this case. I know I shouldn't read Nasby and I should solve the mystery. The spirit is willing but the flesh is weak."

"You know the words of the old song," tittered Clancy, "'I Go Where Duty Calls Me.'"

"I'm too old to be influenced by the words of old songs," grunted the Chief, "but I've got a way of settling the thing. It never failed me yet."

Whereupon he drew a coin from his pocket and flipped it in the air.

"Heads, I lie on the couch and read Nasby; tails, I take hold of this miserable mystery."

The coin fell on the ground and rolled on its side across the floor. Barnes and Clancy followed it with ludicrous intensity. Finally it fell — tail upward.

"It's been so all my life," groaned the Chief;

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“ something always turning up to compel me to take the straight and narrow path of duty, when all of my natural inclinations urge me to wander on the broad road which leads to joy and destruction. But it's all right, Clancy, I'll take the case.”

Having unburdened his mind of these moral reflections, Barnes retired to a corner of the room and calmly considered the facts in the case of the Amsterdam Antiques. Afterwards he spread out two decks of cards for a variation of the ever-present Solitaire, this time called “ The Sickle.” The kings took no part in the game, but were put aside as they appeared, and were used only to make an ornamental handle for the “ Sickle.” The old man pottered over the game for a full hour. At its conclusion, he arose with a grunt of satisfaction.

“ My mind's now as keen as the edge of a sickle, Clancy,” he laughed, “ and the villain who gets in my way is likely to be cut down without pity.”

As they talked, Forward, the legal friend of the detective, entered, his bright, clean-shaven, clear-cut face wearing an air of eager expectancy.

“You’re just in the nick of time,” cried the old man; “we’re going out on a case.”

A cloud of disappointment eclipsed the sunny look on the young lawyer’s countenance.

“That’s too bad,” he said. “I’d made all arrangements to go down to the wharf to meet an old friend of mine who is expected to arrive this afternoon.”

“Oh, well,” remarked the old man, “go ahead and meet the friend. Clancy and I’ll try to handle this case.”

“But it’s not that,” persisted Forward, “I wanted you and Clancy to go with me and meet Miss Bangs —”

“Oh,” chortled the Chief, with an arch look, “so it’s a Miss.”

Forward colored slightly. He spoke with some dignity.

“Miss Bangs is a very, very old friend. We were children together. I thought it would be a nice thing to extend her a little courtesy — you know what I mean. To expedite the examination of her baggage

and make her landing as agreeable as the regulations will permit. Incidentally, I wanted you to meet the young lady."

Barnes pondered for a moment.

"I've half a notion to go with you anyhow. I don't believe the *Eagle Point* will be in until late —"

"The *Eagle Point*?" interrupted the lawyer, eagerly. "Is your business with the *Eagle Point*?"

"Yes."

"Why, that's the boat Miss Bangs is on; we can go together, after all."

"I'm mighty glad," commented the old man, looking at Clancy with a twinkle in his eyes.

"We've been in so many dangerous affairs together that I think it's only fair we should stand by Forward in this crisis. One for all and all for one, you know is our motto. If three Frenchmen were able to stick to that declaration of principles, I know of no good reason why three good, healthy Americans should show the white feather."

"The white feather?" cried Forward, wonderingly.

"Yes, we'll try to save you from being stabbed to death."

"By what?"

"By a pair of piercing black eyes —"

Thoughtlessly Forward blurted out:

"How did you know the color of her eyes?"

"You've told me — unwittingly — a thousand times. Blue, brown and gray eyes have invariably bored you. But a pair of black eyes always transformed you into a blithering idiot."

"Now, Chief," protested the other, "I've told you that Miss Bangs was simply a very, very old friend."

"Yes," laughed the old man, "and I tell you that's a very, very old subterfuge."

Two hours later, as the *Eagle Point* docked, the three men stood expectantly on the edge of the pier. Forward was straining his eyes looking for the familiar form of a petite person who had gone abroad a year before for the purpose of polishing an already liberal education. Barnes and Clancy on their part, tried to figure out what sort of a looking person

would be possessed of six ivory antiques stolen from the Amsterdam Museum.

From out of the mass of passengers on the deck, one figure gradually became distinguishable. It was a small girl with a big black pompadour, surmounted by a much bigger and much blacker hat. Her eyes were a jet black, her nose aquiline, her mouth and chin bewitching but determined and her complexion an indescribable olive. The moment the gang plank was thrown out, Forward rushed up with the speed of a sprinter, never stopping until he stood directly in front of the small symphony in black.

He grasped her two hands with boyish enthusiasm, crying out :

“Bernice, it’s jolly good to see you home again !”

She smiled feebly.

“Mr. Forward, you’ll have everybody looking at us.”

The lawyer dropped her hands as abruptly as he had seized them.

“Mr. Forward,” he said sharply. “So it’s Mr. Forward now, is it, Miss Bangs?”

"Oh, Jack," she cried, reproachfully, "you're so silly."

"Ah, that's better," he exclaimed, the familiar name bringing the sunshine back to his face. "Now tell me all about yourself."

She was looking uneasily toward the other side of the boat. He followed her eyes and his glance fell upon a silk-hatted and frock-coated foreigner. The man smiled at the girl and, as he did so, betrayed a set of teeth whose whiteness made them comparable only to a string of glistening pearls.

Bernice turned to the lawyer with some show of embarrassment.

"Mr. Forward, I want you to meet the Baron de Scheldt. He — he has been very kind to me during the voyage."

The Baron removed his hat and bowed most obsequiously. The lawyer nodded stiffly. He fought down a most unreasoning desire to choke the foreigner to death and throw his body into the dirty river. As the man moved away, Forward turned to the girl bitterly.

“ So that’s the way the land lies, eh? ”

She elevated her eyes and tilted her proud little chin in mid-air and disdained to answer. The moment he uttered the words an apology came surging to his lips, but when he looked at her cold eyes and her attitude of uncompromising hostility, he stifled the good intention.

All was bustle and confusion about them. The activity finally aroused Forward to a sense of time and place. Love-land and Work-a-day-Land are two different countries. One is ideal and the other real. The lawyer awkwardly descended from the clouds.

“ Where’s your trunk? ” he asked.

“ In my state-room,” she answered, looking the other way.

“ Madam,” he said, in freezingly official tones, “ if you’ll take us there, I’ll have it examined so you’ll not be detained on the wharf.”

She shrugged her shapely shoulders silently and led the way to her stateroom. The key was handed to the accompanying inspector and he opened her

trunk and began the work of examination. In the midst of it, he looked up at the lawyer.

"Mr. Forward, you know the lady?"

He bowed in a cold, curt fashion.

The Inspector turned to the woman.

"You purchased nothing abroad?"

"Only a few articles for my personal use."

"You have nothing dutiable with you?"

"Nothing whatever."

"That simplifies matters," quoth the blue-coated one, and hurriedly thrusting a mass of feminine wearing apparel back into the trunk, he locked it and pasted on the lid the white label which would permit the withdrawal from the wharf.

While this little comedy was going on, Barnes and Clancy were carefully scrutinizing all of the passengers. By the order of the Chief the Inspectors all kept a keen lookout for the six ivory antiques from Amsterdam. As Forward and Miss Bangs and the Inspector came out of the stateroom, they met the Chief.

The sight of the old man reminded the lawyer of

his talk earlier in the day, so pulling himself together, he introduced his childhood friend to Barnes. The Chief, who was chivalry itself in the presence of the fair sex, bowed low and murmured the pleasure he felt at the meeting. She rewarded him with an icy smile and then, in a spirit of triumph, presented him to the Baron de Scheldt.

Barnes, whose comprehending mind realized the quarrel, paid but little attention to the foreigner.

While they were talking, Clancy strolled along. The Chief, moving away from the group, whispered in the ear of his assistant.

“What luck?”

“I don’t know but I’ve come across something that looks like a clew.”

“What is it?”

“That old man over yonder.”

Barnes glanced in the direction indicated and saw a man with white whiskers and a storm coat that reached to his heels, nervously pacing the deck.

“What about him?”

“ He raised the biggest kind of a rumpus when the inspectors wanted to examine his trunk.”

“ What did he say? ”

“ Protested against the inquiry as an insult to an American citizen; said he had told the Inspector that he had nothing dutiable and that the word of a gentleman should be sufficient to any ruffianly customs officer.”

“ That always sounds suspicious.”

“ So I thought.”

“ What else? ”

“ I asked him if he happened to have any antiques in his trunk.”

“ Well? ”

“ He turned as white as the front of your shirt.”

Barnes happened to be wearing a blue striped affair of the latest pattern and the clouded metaphor made him smile. But he ignored the mistake and inquired,

“ What did you do? ”

“ Had the trunk sent to the warehouse for a private and careful examination.”

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"Quite right. See the Appraiser and have him inform me of the result as soon as possible."

Clancy moved away.

Barnes followed him a few steps and engaged in an earnest conversation with his assistant. They talked so low that their words were not intelligible to any one else on the boat. But the young man nodded every now and then, as if to say that he understood perfectly just what was expected of him.

In the meantime, the group composed of Miss Bangs, the Baron de Scheldt, and Forward, had gone down the gangplank and were standing on the wharf. The only piece of baggage possessed by the Baron was a small trunk, and a careful examination of that article failed to disclose anything dutiable. A cab had been summoned and the Baron had Miss Bangs' trunk put on the roof behind the driver. Forward prepared to escort the young woman to the conveyance. But calmly ignoring him, she took the proffered arm of the Baron, and bade the lawyer a curt and formal good-by.

Barnes, who watched the pantomime from the

deck of the vessel, saw Forward's face grow grayish. The young fellow stood there, as if frozen to the spot, while the cab containing the man and the woman rattled away.

The Chief had grown very fond of the clever United States Attorney, and the incident made his blood boil with hot rage. He hastened down the gang plank and took Forward by the arm affectionately.

"My boy," he said, warmly, "forget it. She isn't worth a thought of —"

"Stop!" cried the other, passionately. "Don't you dare to say a word against her. I —"

He broke down. He recovered almost immediately, and gulping down a queer sensation in his throat, said contritely:

"Forgive me, Barnes. I didn't mean to speak that way to you. I'm a little upset."

"It's all right, my boy," said the old man, soothingly. "Brace up. You'll recover."

Forward gripped the hand that was extended to him, and the two men left the dock arm in arm.

They proceeded to the Customs House together, and after a few casual inquiries concerning the suspected trunk that Clancy had sent to the warehouse, Barnes turned to his companion and said :

“ I’m going to ask you a favor.”

“ What is it? ”

“ I want you to call on Miss Bangs. I’ll go with you.”

Forward looked aghast.

“ My dear Barnes, the idea is preposterous. You surely give me credit for having some self-respect.”

The Chief eyed him coldly.

“ If you don’t go, I’ll think you’ve a streak of yellow in you.”

Forward laughed nervously.

“ How absurd! I can’t for the life of me, see where the question of courage comes in.”

“ I do. You’re an American. Do you propose to sit down and let a Baron — with a ‘ made in Germany ’ stamped all over him — beat you at the game of love? ”

“ But the thing seems too utterly ridiculous for

argument. If the young lady prefers this — this person to me, I don't think it's good form for me to pursue her."

"Good form be hanged! I want to go and see her at her home, and I want you to go with me."

"Really, Chief, I think you'd better proceed with your work instead of flying about in a foolish love chase."

"I don't want any advice," was the sententious reply. "I want your obedience."

"My obedience?"

"Yes; I command you to go there. To refuse is insubordination. Besides," he said slowly, "your refusal will mean an end to our personal relation."

The cold stern look in the usually drowsy eyes convinced the lawyer.

"I'll go, but you don't know what it means to me."

"Oh, yes, I do," was the cheerful response.

An electric cab whirled them up town at an amazing rate of speed. In a little while the vehicle turned into Madison Avenue. On the way Barnes talked

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very seriously to his companion, and by the time they had walked up the high brown stone steps of the fashionable house the lawyer seemed quite composed.

The Chief handed his card to a colored servitor. The servant reappeared in a few minutes and bade him go up stairs to the library. It was a long noble-looking apartment, the walls lined with book-cases and fine paintings.

Bernice Bangs, who was at the far end of the room, advanced to meet him with a gracious smile on her face.

“How kind of you to call on me, Mr. Barnes.”

As she saw Forward coming behind the Chief, the smile slowly died from her lips.

“How do you do,” he said lamely.

“How do you do,” she replied in a colorless voice.

At this moment the visitors beheld the Baron in the rear of the room. He had apparently been talking to Miss Bangs and he did not appear to relish the interruption. He was in street attire, with a long storm ulster.

Barnes and the girl chatted in an inconsequential way. The Baron tapped his foot impatiently and wondered when the conversation would end. But Barnes talked on and on as if he had no thought of ever concluding. Finally the Baron, in a burst of irritation, buttoned up his coat, and going over to Bernice, handed her the tip of his fingers in farewell. The others he ignored.

He strode majestically down the long room, but at the doorway unexpectedly found his passage blocked by Forward.

"Move aside!" he thundered at the lawyer.

Forward made some indistinct reply, but did not budge an inch.

The girl, who noticed Baron's detention, turned to Barnes with wide opened eyes.

"He's losing his head. This is dreadful.

The Chief laughed in a queer sort of way and moved toward the two men. At that moment a queer thing happened.

The Baron reached in his hip pocket and pulled out something which flashed ominously in the

shadow. He raised it, there was a sharp report, a little curling puff of smoke, and Forward's right arm, which had been stretched across the doorway, fell limply to his side. The Baron dashed past the lawyer and down the wide staircase toward the front door.

Barnes went after him like a flash. The fugitive gained the street with the Chief in hot pursuit.

In the meantime Forward was facing Bernice. She noticed that his face was growing pale.

"I beg your pardon," he said in a disjointed way, "I am sure I —"

A sharp twitching of the face cut his words short. She dropped her reserve as if it were a mask and said quickly:

"Are you hurt?"

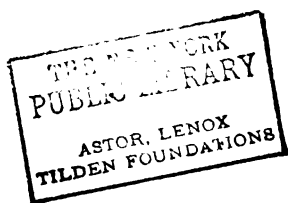
"Oh, no," he began carelessly, "I —"

He paused. The room began to reel. There was a dreadful buzzing in his head. He could no longer see her face. Everything went black. He dropped at her feet unconscious.

She caught at his coat as he fell and it slipped off.



"FORWARD'S RIGHT ARM . . . FELL LIMPLY TO HIS SIDE"



A blood-red spot, the size of a penny, appeared and slowly grew as if by magic, staining the white shirt sleeve.

She gave a shriek of horror.

"Oh, Jack!" she screamed. "Oh, Jack, speak to me."

He lay silently unanswering. The next instant his head was pillowed in her right arm and she was stroking his face and begging him to tell her that he would not die. Barnes, reëntering the room, took in the situation in a glance.

"A reconciliation," he chuckled.

"Oh, Mr. Barnes," cried Bernice, frantically, "get a doctor quickly! I'm afraid Jack's dying."

The old man was on his hands and knees at once.

"Get me a basin of hot water at once. After that some court-plaster and bandages. A sip of brandy, too, if it's handy."

She rushed from the room in a dazed sort of way, delighted to be of service. In the meantime, Barnes tore away the shirt sleeve and made a more thorough examination of the wound.

"It's all right," he said to himself; "the ball has gone clean through the fleshy part of the arm. Very painful but not dangerous."

But this time she had returned with the requisites.

Barnes took the brandy bottle and, pressing it to the lips of the prostrate man, sent a few drops trickling down his throat. A slight tinge of color came into the white face.

In a few moments Forward began to move restlessly, and then he opened his eyes languidly. She kissed him rapturously.

"Oh, Jack! I'm so glad you're alive!" she exclaimed.

Happiness radiated from his pale face.

"So am I," and he smiled feebly.

"Oh, Jack!" she cried contritely, "say you'll forgive me."

He protested brokenly.

"I'm the one to ask forgiveness."

"I was a vixen," she insisted.

"I was a cad," he protested.

Barnes laughed outright, in the hearty way he had when he was perfectly happy.

"Postpone this nonsense," he said, "until the doctor has finished his work."

"Are you a doctor?" she queried.

"No," he admitted, "only one of those first aid to the injured fellows."

In a few minutes the wound was washed, dressed and bandaged, and Forward was seated in a comfortable arm-chair in all the joy of quick convalescence.

"All he needs," said Barnes, roguishly, "is good nursing. If he gets the right kind of attention he will be all right in a week or two."

"I'll nurse him myself," she announced, emphatically. "I'm the cause of all this and my place is by his side."

The Chief seized his opportunity.

"Miss Bangs," he said gently, "I want you tell me all you know about the Baron — in as few words as possible."

She flushed.

“That hateful thing. I’m sorry I ever met him.”

“Perhaps it’s all for the best. Tell me about him.”

“I met him for the first time on the ship coming over,” she said. “He was so polite and attentive that he captured my foolish fancy. After he gained my confidence, he told me the most pathetic story about himself. He said there was a conspiracy among his enemies to rob him of his vast estates in Germany. The thing — a real nobleman in distress — appealed to my girlish sense of romance. He threw out little hints day after day, and finally confessed that he carried papers in a little box which, when produced in the courts of America, would fully establish his right to his title and his castle on the Rhine.

“He said the conspiracy against him was so deep-seated and so wide-spread that it extended on both sides of the ocean. In other words, that the final play of the game would occur in New York. He was in deadly dread of losing his papers. He said a desperate effort might be made to rob him of his

precious documents before he left the ship. Finally in a guarded way, he implored my help. I fell in the trap. I concealed his box in the bottom of my trunk. He came to the house with me and I opened the trunk and gave him his papers and he was leaving with them when this dreadful thing occurred."

"Not so dreadful," laughed the Chief.

"But Jack's wounded and the brute's escaped."

"Jack is wounded, it is true, but he has the compensation of being attended by an adorable nurse."

Forward looked the thanks he owed Barnes for this dainty compliment.

Bernice flushed.

"But what about the Baron?"

"The Baron — oh, I guess we'll have to ask Clancy about that."

A clattering noise in the doorway attracted their attention. Clancy was there to answer for himself. He was not alone, either. He had the Baron de Scheldt by the nape of the neck and was shaking him as an Irish setter would shake a nasty rat. The little fellow saluted briskly.

“ I’ve carried out your orders, Chief. Here’s the goods — made in Germany.”

The Baron certainly looked very ignoble. He did not favor any of them with so much as a glance, but kept his eyes glued on the ground.

The Chief spoke sharply.

“ Open his coat, Clancy.”

The young fellow obeyed, and a long, narrow box fell to the floor.

“ The key? ” demanded Barnes.

The Baron fumbled nervously in his pocket and produced the instrument.

“ Open the box.”

The box was laid on the table and as the lid was lifted, their wondering eyes beheld the six small ivory carvings. They answered the description precisely. They were the stolen antiques made by the celebrated artist, Artus Quellinus, of Antwerp.

A telephone call brought two Customs Inspectors to the house, and in fifteen minutes the Baron and the box were on the way to prison.

Forward and Bernice were hysterically happy. Their hearts surged with joy.

"I'm filled with sunshine," he said.

"I — I feel awfully foolish," she said.

"You've missed the castle on the Rhine," he teased.

"But I've got you and castles in the air," she retorted.

Barnes looked on helplessly. He turned to his assistant:

"Come on, Clancy. Let's get out. This is no place for us."

THE END



GO, GET 'EM!

By William A. Wellman

Maréchal des Logis of Escadrille N. 87

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